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LETTERS

RESPECTING

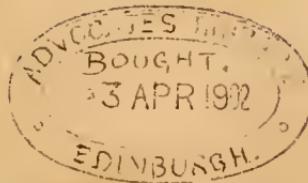
THE WATT FAMILY,

BY

GEORGE WILLIAMSON.

"**F**AR from me and my friends be such frigid philosophy as may conduct us, indifferent and unmoved, over any ground which has been dignified by wisdom, bravery, or virtue."

JOHNSON'S TOUR.



GREENOCK:

PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR BY W. JOHNSTON & SON.

1840.



TO THE
MEMBERS
OF
THE WATT CLUB.

GENTLEMEN,

I have much pleasure in dedicating to you the following letters respecting the "Watt Family."

As you participated in the satisfaction imparted by the interesting investigation which led to the compilation of these letters, and concur with me in their publication in this form, I am sure you will share with me in whatever degree of temerity may be chargeable on the latter measure.

I am,

Gentlemen,

With great esteem,

Your very faithful Servant,

G. W.

Greenock, 14th January, 1840.

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PREFACE.

WHEN the researches concerning the Watt family, which form the subject of the following letters, were first entered upon, the writer had little more in view, in that undertaking, than to gratify a curiosity felt by him, in common with a few friends who composed a Club for social conversation.

In the year 1820, the members of the club alluded to, at one of their meetings, fell into a conversation respecting the wide-spreading celebrity of James Watt, who had paid the debt of nature in the preceding year. The place of his birth, however, was not so certainly known, to any one present, as not to render it probable that the Burgh of Barony of Crawfordsdyke, or the City of Glasgow, should, on investigation, be found to have as good a claim as the Town of Greenock, to the ascription of that honour. To ascertain this point in the history of the improver of the Steam Engine—a point, in all ages, deemed important in the lives of great men—the researches were instantly commenced.

A successful termination of the enquiries then prosecuted, besides yielding for the time the pleasure sought, stimulated the author of the Letters to further exertions. Other facts, bearing upon the subject, and gathered from a variety of sources, were added to those previously collected ; but it was not till the month of July, 1838, that the whole were embodied in the form of letters, and after considerable hesitation in regard to the utility of the measure, sent to the editor of the *Greenock Advertiser* for publication.

The first published was that respecting the

Grandfather of Mr Watt. As that letter was received favourably by the readers of the *Advertiser*, the second, third, and fourth letters, were successively given to the public through the same medium. Copies of the newspapers containing these letters were anonymously transmitted, as published, to James Watt, Esquire, of Astonhall, the son of the philosopher.

The writer of the letters may be permitted to account for the delay which took place in giving publicity to facts and circumstances tending, in some small degree, to illustrate the life of so distinguished a man as James Watt, and for the appearance of these in the present shape, and, at the present time. When he first thought of making them public—and when his thoughts were led to the subject again and again,—he perceived various difficulties in the way. The posthumous fame of Mr Watt had become so gigantic—the practical uses of his rare inventions, every succeeding day, so surpassed the wonders of the preceding—that, what was purposed to be published, became, in the estimation of the Author, so diminished in value, and so little calculated to convey an adequate idea of the genius and character of the man, that his heart fairly failed him.—On the other hand, when he reflected that he was only an humble contributor to the general stock of information—that what was to be given was no invention of his—had been obtained from sources of unquestionable respectability, and that others better skilled in the workings of the human mind, might, from what should be published extract more valuable matter than he supposed the Letters contained, or might found upon the facts

collected deeper moral reflections than he felt himself competent to make—he ventured on giving them to the public in a collected form, to be remembered or forgotten, preserved or thrown aside, just as they should be found to deserve.

These last observations are meant particularly to apply to the facts published respecting the early life of the great philosopher, which are made the subject of the last letter. But the Author of the Letters did not dare to suppress any information he had obtained, however homely ; and it is only to be regretted that the sources of original oral tradition are exhausted, at least in and around Greenock. As what is given has been derived from individuals who were contemporaries of Mr Watt, and had known him in his youth and in his manhood, the best guarantee is afforded that the information is authentic.

The Letters above referred to were suffered to repose in the scattered columns of the *Advertiser*, with no great probability of their being made to assume a more imposing form, from the time of their publication, till the Author had put into his hands, on the 26th September, 1839, a copy of the Paris edition of the “*Eloge Historique de James Watt par M. Arago, Secretaire perpetuel de l'academie des Sciences,*” and inscribed on the envelope, in the hand-writing of Mr Watt of Astonhall,

“ For the Author of Letters, in the *Greenock Advertiser*, respecting the Watt family.”

A present so gratifying, implying, at least, Mr Watt’s approbation of the Letters, as illustrative of some passages in the lives of his ancestors, not elsewhere published, emboldened the Author to give them publicity in a shape not at first contemplated.

He does this with still greater confidence too, on account of certain expressions in M. Arago's *Eloge*,* as the Writer of the Letters claims the honour of priority in the researches which he has made—researches having for their object the preservation of the genealogy of a family which has given to the world a NAME, worthy of being associated in the page of history with every thing useful in arts, and exemplary in morals.

P.S. The Writer of these Letters has to acknowledge the readiness with which David Crawford, Esq., allowed him to consult the Chartulary of the Barony of Cartsburn, in reference to the subject of inquiry.

The frankness with which Mrs Macfarlan allowed him to peruse the Title Deeds of the property now belonging to her, on which Thomas Watt resided, is also acknowledged.

To William Scott, Esq., of Finnart, he feels himself greatly obliged, for the original documents respecting the house in which the great mechanist was born.

And to Mrs M'Goun he takes leave to return his best thanks, for the use of Mr Watt's letters, addressed to her uncle, the late Mr Jas. Walkinshaw.

He also acknowledges his obligations to James Turner and John K. Gray, Esqrs., Town-Clerks of Greenock, for the ready access they at all times gave him to the Records of the Burgh.

* Nos voisins de l'autre côté de la Manche ont le hon esprit de penser que la généalogie d'une famille honnête et industrielle est tout aussi bonne à conserver que les parchemins de certaines maisons titrées, devenues sciemment célèbres par l'énormité de leurs crimes ou de leurs vices.

Our neighbours on the other side of the channel, have the good sense to be of opinion that the genealogy of a respectable and industrious family is as deserving of preservation, as the parchments of certain titled houses which have attained celebrity only by the enormity of their crimes or their vices.—*Translation of the Historical Eloge of James Watt, by J. P. Muirhead, Esq. M.A.*

LETTER I.

THE GRANDFATHER

OF

JAMES WATT.

To the Editor of the Greenock Advertiser.

SIR—Having made a collection of a few facts regarding the ancestors of James Watt, may I request the insertion, in your paper, of the following respecting his grandfather:—

THOMAS WATT, grandfather to the celebrated James Watt, was born during the civil wars between Charles the First and the Parliament. The father of Thomas, who farmed a piece of land, belonging to himself, in the county of Aberdeen, having engaged, as most men of the time were obliged to do, on one side or other, in the wars, was killed in one of Montrose's battles. It is not stated on which side he fought, but the probability is, that he espoused the cause of the covenanters. My reason for supposing this shall be afterwards given. From the age assigned to Thomas Watt, at the time of his death, and there are two records extant of that event, he must have been born between the years 1639 and 1642—a period of great trouble in Scotland, particularly in the county and city of Aberdeen, when, according to John Spalding, in his “History of the Troubles and Memorable Trans-

actions in Scotland, in the reign of Charles I.,” that country was left “almost manless, moneyless, horseless, and armless—so pitifully was the same borne down and subdued.”

Thomas Watt was very young when his father was killed. On the occurrence of that disastrous event, and by reason of the loss of the patrimonial property, consequent upon the distraction of the times, the bringing up of the orphan devolved upon some of his relatives. Under these untoward circumstances, it may easily be supposed that, in his education, he was less indebted to the assistance he received from others, than to his own exertions ; notwithstanding of which, it so happened, that he made very considerable progress in mathematical science ; and if the occasional use of a *Latin* law phrase, in the court rolls of the burgh of barony of Crawfordsdyke, of which it will presently be shown he was a magistrate, be held as proof of proficiency in that language, then there is evidence, although he seemed to pride himself upon his designation or title of “mathematician,” that he had cultivated other branches of learning besides mathematics. It is not ascertained how or where he spent the early part of his life. The first notice which we obtain of him is, as a teacher of mathematics, in the town of Crawfordsdyke, then a separate burgh of barony, but now included within the parliamentary burgh of Greenock. The branches of mathematics taught by him, were chiefly those connected with sea-faring matters, as mention is frequently made of him in the documents I have consulted, as a “teacher of navigation.” That he taught mensuration and surveying, may easily be inferred from the knowledge acquired, in these departments of science, by his son John, of whom notice shall be taken before concluding this letter. The place of Thomas Watt’s residence in Crawfordsdyke is well ascertained. Indeed, this is quite easily gathered from the public rec-

ords ; for, his success in his profession having enabled him to become proprietor of the house and garden which he occupied, a description of their boundaries and locality is to be found in the charters granted by the superior of the burgh, or lord of the manor, as well as in the public records. The house was situated on the east side of the bottom of the street in Crawfordsdyke known by the name of the Stannars, and adjoining the ground on which are now erected certain buildings connected with the premises occupied by the eminent marine-engineers, Caird & Co. It had a slanting front to what was then, and still is, the chief street or thoroughfare of Crawfordsdyke. This street is yet without a name.* To the house and garden here mentioned, he acquired right by charter from Thomas Crawford, of Cartsburn, on 6th March, 1691. The life-rent of the property, by the same instrument, was conveyed to Margaret Sherrer, his wife. The house in which he dwelt was, about twenty-five years ago, pulled down, and another built on the spot ; and the property now belongs, by purchase from the former proprietors, to Mrs M'Farlane and her children.

Besides the property before referred to, Thomas Watt became the proprietor of another house, in the town of Greenock, which was situated at the "Open Shore," and occupied part of the site of the large fabric standing at the opening, or fronting the short lane, leading from the new dry dock. His acquisition of property affords evidence that his

* A lady, whose ancestors were residents in Crawfordsdyke, mentioned to me a fact which, I think, serves to fix the etymology of the *Stannars*. It was here the weigh-house was situated, and the weights, or *Standards*, were kept for weighing out the salt, used of old in curing herrings, of which trade Crawfordsdyke had, at one time, a considerable share. Nothing was more likely than that the word *Standards* should be changed into *Stannars*, according to the Scotch way of pronouncing the word :—hence, "*the Stannars*." With regard to the street leading from the burn to the bottle-work, to which Thomas Watt's house had a slanting front, why may it not be called, in memory of that respectable man, "*Watt Street* ?"

circumstances were easy and comfortable. Nor is this to be wondered at, for he seems to have been without a competitor in Crawfordsdyke or in Greenock ; and Greenock being then, as it still is, the first sea-port town in Scotland, and even then in the possession of some foreign trade, there can be little doubt that Thomas Watt's knowledge of mathematics was in great request, and that his school was attended by all who felt a desire to qualify themselves for the command of ships, or for carrying on the growing trade of the place.

Thomas Watt attached himself to the Church of Scotland ; and it is from this fact I infer that his father took part with the covenanters in the time of Charles I. In 1695, I find in the records of the kirk session of the west parish of Greenock, the following entry made :—“The session taking into consideration the great inconveniences they laboured under, by reason of the paucitie of elders now present in office, and that they stood in need of many moe (more) to join with them in overseeing the manners of the people :” nominated a number of respectable individuals residing in the “towns” of Greenock and Crawfordsdyke, to that office, and among the rest, “Thomas Watt for Carsdyke.”* He was ordained 17th March, 1695.

He held for several years the office of baron bailie, or in other words, was chief magistrate of the burgh of barony of Crawfordsdyke. In the records of the “Head Court,” held for receiving the feudal suit and service of the vassals and tenants of the barony of Cartsburn, I find he presided in that capacity as early as 20th November, 1697, and subscribed the minutes of court. The last time he presided and subscribed the minutes of court, was on 21st Dec., 1717. At the commencement of the record, and in form of an index, there is a roll made up in Mr

* In common parlance, “Crawfordsdyke” is abbreviated into “Carsdyke.”

Watt's neat hand with the following title :—“ Court roll of the barony of Cartsburn, and burgh of barony of Crawfordsdyke, containing the names of tenants in landward, and feuars, and the sub-tenants in burgh and landward, and the tenants inhabiting in the toune, made up October 23, 1712.”

Besides the duty of overseeing the manners of the people, which devolved upon him as an elder of the Church of Scotland, he was more than once appointed Presbytery elder ; and, from his superior skill in figures, was frequently required by the session to audit and report upon the kirk treasurer's accounts. It would appear that the office of kirk treasurer was, at that time, a gratuitous appointment, for, in 1708, I find Mr Watt himself appointed to that office in the following terms :—“ The session this day nominate and choose Thomas Watt, treasurer, and he, nor any other after him, who shall happen to be chosen, shall be obliged to continue in that office above a year.” Thomas Watt, for several months in the year 1711, performed the duties as well of kirk treasurer as of session clerk, in the absence, or on the death, of the individual who held the latter office. The entries made by him in the session books, during this period, are written in a fine old hand, and his signature, which frequently occurs in the record, is characteristically elegant.

It may be amusing to learn what was considered, in those times of strict discipline, part of the duties which, “ in overseeing the manners of the people,” lay upon the members of the eldership. The following is a curious example :—On the 5th March, 1706, a minute appears in the record, before referred to, in these words :—“ The minister informed them (the session) that mountebanks having come to this place, had erected a stage for plays to be acted thereon, and proposed they would fall on some effectual method for suppressing the same. The session, considering the thing to be unlawful and inductive of much sin and looseness, appoint

some of their number, to wit, James Crawford, John Clark, and Thomas Watt, to go to the doctor in name of the session, and discharge him to use rope-dancing, men simulating themselves fools, or women exposing themselves to the publick by dancing on the stage, or any indecent behaviour, allowing him only to expose his drugs or medicines to publick sale." It might be made a question by some, which of the two was the greater evil, the permitting the rope-dancing of the men, or the allowance to the *doctor* to expose his drugs to sale. Probably it would have been as well that the doctor had been "discharged" from exercising either of his vocations, the one being, most likely, as pernicious to the bodies, as the other was to the morals of the people. Some other examples are afforded by the same record, of Thomas Watt's fidelity as an elder, in censuring violations of the cessation from ordinary work, enjoined by the decalogue, on the Sabbath day. He was of the old school—a zealous, energetic and working elder.

Thomas Watt was gathered to his fathers in a good old age. On a flat tomb-stone placed in the yard of the West Church of Greenock, to record the period of that event, and to mark the spot where his remains are deposited, we find an inscription, all of which, except, of course, that which notified the time of his own death, there can be little doubt, was penned by himself. It affords a curious proof of the methodical and somewhat punctilious habit which his mind acquired from the nature of his pursuits. He, in the first place, inscribes the initial letters of his own and his wife's names; then announces that spot to be the burial place of himself, his wife and children; and, lastly, he gives the names, age, and time of death of such of his family as predeceased himself, with the number of the years, months, and days each of them lived, to all which is added, in the same spirit of particularity, most likely by his son, the period of his death,

and that of his spouse, and the number of years they lived in wedlock. The following is a literal copy of the inscription :—

T W.

M S

THIS IS THE BURIAL PLACE
OF THOMAS WAT PROFE-
-SOR OF THE MATHEMATIC
-KS IN CRAWFORDSDYK HIS
WIFE AND CHILDREN.

1701.

NAMES.	AGE.	TIME OF Death.
Y.	M.	D.
MARGT.	0.	11. 6. OCTR 1683.
CATHREN	0.	00. 10. DECR. 1687.
THOMAS	2.	2. 4. FEBR
DORITIE	18.	5. 20. AUGT 1706.
THOMAS WATT DIED FEB 28. 1734 AGED 92		
MARGRET SHERRER HIS SPOUSE DIED MARCH 21. 1755 AGED 79. LIVED IN MAREEDGE 55 YEARS.		

As before stated, there are two records extant which give the time of the death of Thomas Watt, namely, the tomb-stone above referred to, and the books of the kirk session of the west parish of Greenock. In the latter he is said to have died upon the 27th, not the 28th, February, 1734, and to be aged not 92, but “*about 95*” years.*

Thomas Watt was unfortunate in the premature death of several of his family. Besides Thomas, who is stated to have died in infancy, he had other two sons, John, above-mentioned, and James. John being the eldest son, succeeded to his father’s property in Crawfordsdyke, to which he obtained a charter, or what is technically called a precept of *clare constat*, dated 28th August, 1736. His brother James subscribes as witness to the sasine which followed on this charter to John. In these instruments, John is described as a teacher of math-

* See Appendix,

emates in Glasgow. During part of the period of his residence in Crawfordsdyke, he officiated as clerk of the burgh of barony. He was appointed to that office on 25th October, 1712, as appears by the following entry in the court record :—“ John Watt, eldest lawful son to Thomas Watt, mathematician in Crawfordsdyke, is admitted clerk to the barony of Cartsburn, and burgh and barony of Crawfordsdyke.” On 15th November, 1712, both father and son subscribe the minutes of the court, the former as bailie, and the latter as clerk. John was educated a mathematician and surveyor. He was an able man, and draughted neatly. He died in 1737, leaving behind him a survey and map of the river Clyde. A copy of this map, which was published after his death, by his brother James, is now hung up in the Council Chamber of Greenock.

The parish record already referred to, as well as the tomb-stone, states the period of the death of Margaret Sherrer ; but although both agree on the 21st March, as being the day and month of the death, yet they widely differ in assigning the year—the session book recording it as in 1735, the year following the death of her husband, and in the 84th year of her age, and the tomb-stone giving it as in 1755—twenty-one years after the death of her husband, and in the 79th year of her age.* By the former statement, Thomas Watt would be made out to have been fourteen years older than his wife, while by the latter he would be thirty-four. Of the two accounts, the former is the more probable ; and, besides, the time they are said to have “lived in marriage” makes the discrepancy still more palpable, and even absurd. In a future communication I shall take occasion to show that an error has been committed in deepening the figures upon the tomb-stone—an operation which took place in 1808, by the direction, but not

* See Appendix.

under the personal superintendence, of the illustrious grandson of Thomas Watt, by converting the 1735 into 1755, which might inadvertently be done by an inattentive tradesman.

I have been thus particular in recording some circumstances in the life of a respectable individual, whose grandson has established a better title to the character of a benefactor of mankind than most of those for whom such a reputation is claimed, either in ancient or modern times ; and I persuade myself I need offer no apology to the people of Greenock for obtruding upon their notice an essay—however imperfectly executed—which serves to bring into more prominent view the lineage of a man of whom they have so much reason to be proud.

I am, Sir,

Your obt. Servant,

W.

Greenock, July 12, 1838.

LETTER II.

THE FATHER OF JAMES WATT.

To the Editor of the Greenock Advertiser.

SIR,—Having made a farther collection of facts regarding the family of James Watt, may I request the insertion of the following respecting the father of that eminent character :—

JAMES WATT, the father of the distinguished engineer, was the second son of Thomas Watt, respecting whom my last communication was made. He was born in Crawfordsdyke, on 28th January, 1699,* and was bred a wright or house-carpenter. Beyond this, and the fact of his having removed into Greenock to carry on business, little or nothing is known of his early life. His history, in his more advanced years, is identified with the early improvements of the town of Greenock, and is in considerable part obtained from the public records of that burgh. The earliest account which I get of Mr Watt is in the character of a “*manager*” of the funds of the town of Greenock. The nature and duties of this office shall be afterwards explained. The record from which I derive my information goes no farther back than 1750. It details, with great clearness and regularity, the proceedings at the various sederunts of the body of which Mr Watt was a

* See Appendix.

member; and his signature, with the subscriptions of his colleagues in office, is to be found to these minutes. These managers were chosen by the inhabitants of Greenock under a charter, which may be denominated the *Magna Charta* of the town of Greenock—being the ground-work and very foundation of the prosperity of the town of Greenock, inasmuch as it gave to the inhabitants the uncontrolled management of their own affairs, at a time when feudal maxims and notions had scarcely given way to enlarged commercial views, and the growing enterprise of the people of Scotland.

The charter alluded to is dated 30th January, 1741,* and was granted by Sir John Schaw, of Greenock †—a gentleman of enlarged mind and patriotic sentiments—to the feuars and sub-feuars of the burgh, chiefly for the purpose of empowering them to manage certain funds, then levied from a tax laid upon “malt grounded at the mills of westward Greenock,” and voluntarily paid by the inhabitants. By this charter, Sir John, as feudal superior, gave authority to the feuars and sub-feuars to “appoint nine of the most wise, substantial, and best qualified of the said burgh of Greenock, being feuars, to be managers and administrators of the whole public funds already belonging to the said burgh and barony, or which shall hereafter pertain and belong to the same.”

Down to the date of this charter, the revenue of the town, such as it was at the time, was under the

* The original of this charter has unfortunately been lost; but a copy, and I believe the only copy extant, bearing every mark of authenticity, was sometime ago presented to me by the deceased Mr John Paton, writer, and, as an historical monument, is worthy of preservation. The copy, so recovered, is now among the papers of the Council Chamber.

† It will be gratifying to every admirer of genuine patriotism, to know that a copy of an original portrait of Sir John Schaw, in the possession of Lord Catheart, has, since this letter was written, been placed in the public reading room of Greenock, as a tribute of respect to the memory of the *founder* of the town of Greenock,—the expense being defrayed by a subscription, raised by a few public-spirited individuals belonging to the town.

control of Sir John. As yet there was no corporation or body politic ; for, although, by a charter granted by Charles I. to the ancestors of Sir John, in 1635, and ratified by the Scottish legislature in 1641, “the toun or village of Greenock” was erected into “ane frie brugh of barony, to be called now, and in all time coming, the brugh of Greenock ;” still, all power and jurisdiction were vested in the superior.

While matters stood in this position, Sir John, and the inhabitants of the town, in 1750, applied to parliament, and obtained an act, (24th Geo. II.) which was to continue in force for thirty-one years only, and is entitled, “An Act for levying a duty of two pennies Scots, or a sixth part of a penny sterling, on every Scots pint of ale and beer which shall be brewed for sale, brought into, tapped, or sold within the town of Greenock, &c., for repairing the harbour of the said town, and for other purposes therein mentioned.” And the following gentlemen were appointed trustees for receiving the duty, viz. :—“John Alexander, Robert Donald, Robert Rac, James Warden, Gabriel Mathie, William Gammil, James Watt, and James Butcher, merchants, and Nathan Wilson, surgeon, of the town of Greenock.”

The improvements contemplated by the act were “cleaning, deepening, building, and repairing the said harbour and piers, and for building a new church, town-house, poor and school houses, and market places, and also a public clock ;” and the trustees, whose names are given above, set about the discharge of the duties of the trust with laudable energy and perseverance, as is demonstrated, not only by the minutes of their proceedings, but the present existence of many of the works executed by them.

During the currency of the act 24th Geo. II., Sir John, ever ready to promote the interests of the town, on 12th April, 1751, granted another charter

to the feuars and sub-feuars of the town, empowering them “to make choicer of *twelve* of the most wise and substantial of their number to be magistrates and counsellors of the said burgh.” This charter, a certified copy of whieh I have in my possession, and the only copy whieh I have seen or heard of, seems to have been withdrawn, and not acted upon ; as, on 2d September of the same year, Sir John granted another charter, which has reference to the act of Geo. II., and reeapitulates the name of Mr Watt, and the other trustees named in that act, and by which the feuars and sub-feuars are authorised to make choice, not of twelve of their number, as mentioned in the charter of 12th April, but of “the said *nine* trustees, to be magistrates and counsellors of the burgh.” This latter charter continued in force from 2d September, 1751, to 14th November, 1833, when it was superseded by the reform act.

By the election consequent upon this charter, Mr Watt was elevated to the status of a councillor of the town. On the 15th September, 1755, he was chosen treasurer of the burgh ; and on the 12th September, 1757, he was elected to the office of bailie, or junior magistrate. The senior bailie having died on 28th April, 1759, Mr Watt remained sole magistrate, till the next election on 10th September following. On this occasion, a majority of the votes of the feuars being tendered for his advancement to the office of chief magistrate, he declined to accept the proffered honour for reasons then assigned, but again took the office of treasurer. To this office of treasurer, whieh is declared by the charter to be annual, he was repeatedly re-elected. His last election thereto was on 12th September, 1768, but he continued in uninterrupted connexion with the council, as a councillor, till 1774. On the 12th May of that year, he subscribes for the last time the minutes of its meetings ; and on the 3d of June following, he gave in a resignation of his office to the council, upon which the

following minute was recorded :—“ Which day the magistrates and council being met, Mr James Watt gave into the meeting a resignation dated 30th ult., by him resigning his office of a manager and councillor, which the meeting accepted of, and they returned him thanks for the many good services he had done to the community, while in the said office.”

It has thus been shown that Mr Watt was a member of the town council, such as it was before the charter 1741, and during its more perfect organisation, subsequent to the granting of the charter 1751, for a period approaching to a quarter of a century. During the time he was in office as manager, councillor, treasurer, and magistrate, the improvements of the town went on in a spirited manner. Ground was feued from Lord Cathcart, westward from the mid quay, for building a “ new breast”—the dredging of the harbours was set vigorously about—the new breast was built—the quays were laid with flags—a new church and town-house were built—the cellars at the Bell-entry were proceeded with, and Mr Watt was ordered to make out an estimate of the expense of erecting a “ bell-house” upon the roof of the new cellars. The building of the new church, which is that standing at “ *the Square*,” (recently called Cathcart Square, in compliment, most worthily, to Lord Cathcart,) seems to have been an era of some importance to the inhabitants of Greenock ; for on the 3d of April, 1759, the minutes of council record, that “ a general advertisement was given to the inhabitants of the town of Greenock, to be present that afternoon at receiving infestment of the ground for new church and manse, which was accordingly done in favours of the managers, councillors, feuars, sub-feuars, and inhabitants of the town of Greenock, when a good number were present.” Mr Watt subscribes this minute as chief magistrate, his colleague, as already mentioned, be-

ing dead. On the 6th of the same month, the foundation stone of the church now called the Mid Parish Church was laid in the “east corner.” Lord Cathcart, to whom the ground belonged, on which the church and manse were built, and which was valued at £130, not only conveyed the property gratuitously to the magistrates and council, but furnished the plan of the former building, which is said to be after St. Martin’s in the Fields, in London. Mr Watt planned the arrangement of the pews of the church.

On the day on which Mr Watt “first took his seat” as bailie, 1st November, 1757, the minutes of that meeting set forth “that the town of Glasgow having intimated their design of locking the river of Clyde, and a draught of the bill to be brought into parliament having been sent from Glasgow for perusal, the magistrates and council were of opinion that, for very obvious reasons, the same ought to be opposed ;” and, accordingly, on 20th February, 1759, Bailie James Watt, and James M’Neill, collector of the customs at Greenock, were nominated as proper persons to go to Edinburgh to engage Mr Walter Stewart, advocate, “to go to London and act as council for the town of Greenock, in opposition to the said lock bill.” This lock bill was afterwards abandoned by the city of Glasgow. In noticing the above improvements of the town of Greenock in connexion with the name of Mr Watt, it is far from my purpose to depreciate, in any degree, the services of his colleagues in office. My only view in doing so, is to justify the character which his son afterwards drew of him, and which is to be found on his grave-stone, that he was “a zealous promoter of the improvements of the town.”

Mr Watt seems to have acquired a pretty extensive business. Before the death of Sir John Schaw, he was employed by Sir John in enlarging the mansion house of Greenock, by the erection of its present western front. The undertaking of this addition, which was of considerable magnitude,

implied the command of extensive funds, or good credit. The substantial manner in which the work was executed, evinces the fidelity with which the undertaker discharged his duty. To the business of a builder, he added the multifarious concerns of a ship-chandler—embracing not only the minor outfits of the shipping, but the earving of “figure-heads.” The “touehing” of ships’ compasses was done at his workshop, and most probably, also, the cleaning of quadrants, as these latter pieces of business are generally performed by the same hand. He constructed the first crane which was set up at the harbour. It was used for the loading of vessels with tobacco. I notice these comparatively insignificant facts, because I think it extremely probable that the first mechanical ideas, caught by his eminent son, might have been in some way connected with those branches of his father’s manifold occupations.

Mr Watt, on 17th May, 1734, purchased a house and piece of ground close to the sea. They are situated in Shaw Street, opposite to the foot of Longwell close, and are described as “a tenement of land, yard, weir, and others.” This property is among the oldest feus in the town of Greenock, having been feued on 2d August, 1682. These premises were enlarged in 1736, by a purchase of ground from Sir John, “with liberty to the said James Watt, and his foresaids, to edify, build, and repair the foresaid tenement of land and others above-mentioned, and to build office-houses upon any part of the ground, close, or weir, and additional ground above disponed.” In 1754, as I conjecture from the circumstance of his having borrowed, on the 30th November of that year, the sum of £200 from Lord Cathcart, which was repaid in two or three years afterwards, he built the large house standing upon that ground. On 10th August, 1774, he conveyed this property to his son, James Watt, junior, who thus became a feuar in the town

of Greenock. The property now belongs to G. J. Weir, Esq., lately one of the magistrates of Greenock.

By those who knew him, Mr Watt is described to have been a man of prudence and sagacity. When ships' stores were being made up at his place of business, he was wont to recommend a good supply of sail needles and twine, with the remark, "I knew of a ship being lost from the want of such articles on board." He himself might have been the sufferer in the instance referred to; for, if my memory serves me aright, the individual from whom I derived the above information, told me he was unfortunate in some maritime adventures in which he was engaged.

In domestic life, Mr Watt was social and kind. He affected rather a genteel way of living, and in this he was ably assisted by his wife, Agnes Muirhead. Mrs Watt is described as having been a woman above common, and genteel in her personal appearance, and orderly in her way of living. My information on this subject was acquired more than ten years ago, from a venerable lady, then in her 85th year.* My informant described her as "a braw braw woman—none now to be seen like her." Her death was sudden. She is said to have had a dream, in which she heard a voice, requiring her to prepare to appear before the judgment seat of Christ, in three days; and three days after the dream she died.

Mr Watt, previous to his death, suffered a decay of his mental faculties; but this state of his mind could not have been of very long duration,—for it will be recollectcd, as I have shown above, that his resignation, as a councillor, took place in 1774, and as he died in 1782, the period of his withdrawal from

* This information was derived from the late Mrs Eason, West Blackhall Street, who was born in Crawfordsdyke, on 9th November, 1742, and died 11th August, 1833.

public business, to the time of his death, embraced only eight years. Indeed, I find his name in a feu contract, dated 15th and 23d September, 1773, entered into between the magistrates and council of Greenock, and Sir John Shaw Stewart, the successor of the Sir John Schaw so frequently above referred to, in relation to a piece of ground obtained for the construction of a reservoir, to supply the town with water. Among the last acts of Mr Watt's public life, was the superintendence of this reservoir, and laying the levels for the pipes which were to convey the water into the town. A person* with whom I conversed, told me that he, when a boy, carried the stakes for Mr Watt to drive into the ground, to mark these levels; so that down to the end of 1773, or the summer of 1774, when the operations of the reservoir would, in all likelihood, be proceeded with, he seems to have enjoyed the active use of his faculties, although he would be then in his 75th year.

Mr Watt is buried in the West Church-yard of Greenock, alongside of his venerable father. In 1808, his son caused a tomb-stone to be placed over the grave of his father, and transmitted to the late Mr James Walkinshaw, merchant in Greenock, an inscription to be engraven upon the stone. The stones which cover the mortal remains of these ancestors of the philosopher, are rapidly suffering decay, in the form of the letters and figures, from the ruthless tooth of time. Being laid flat, and, consequently, occasionally trodden upon by the people resorting to the church and church-yard, the inscriptions cannot fail, in the course of a few years, to be considerably injured, if not altogether obliterated; and it will become necessary, in order to the preservation of these interesting memorials, that they be transferred to a record more permanent

* The late Mr John Rodger, ship joiner and blockmaker, Greenock.

than stone. It gives me great pleasure to be enabled to lay before the public, not only the inscription last referred to, but a copy of the letter which accompanied it. Both afford evidence of filial piety, and right feeling. The following is a copy of the letter :—

“ Heathfield, Jan. 27, 1808.

“ Mr James Walkinshaw, Greenock,

“ DEAR SIR,—I send you annexed the inscription intended for my father’s gravestone, which I shall be obliged to you to get neatly executed in the same form as written. I mentioned having the two stones ribated upon one another, thus :—



but, on consideration, it will be better to make them plain joint, thus :—



When the weather becomes milder, I wish also to have the letters cleaned and repaired upon my grandfather’s stone.

“ I should have sent you this sooner, but was indisposed with one bad cold after another since I came home ; and also found a good deal of business behind. I shall thank you to get the workmen to lose no time in getting it finished—otherwise it is possible a stone may be laid upon me before I have laid one on my father.

“ I shall be glad to hear from you of the receipt of this letter,—meanwhile, Mrs Watt joins me in

best compliments and good wishes to you and Miss Walkinshaw, with remembrances to other friends ; and I remain,

“ Dear Sir,
“ Your obliged humble Servt.,

“ JAMES WATT.

“ Remember me to my cousin Anna. I could not go to see Mrs Wilson, but saw Mrs Birnie.”

And the following is a literal copy of the inscription, and in the arrangement in which it is engraven on the stone :—

In memory of
JAMES WATT,
 merchant in Greenock,
A benevolent and ingenious man,
and a zealous promoter of the
improvements of the Town,
who died 1782, aged 84.
of
AGNES MUIRHEID,
 his Spouse,
who died 1753, aged 52;
and of
JOHN WATT,
 their Son,
who perished at Sea, 1763, aged 23;
To his revered Parents,
and to his Brother—James Watt
has placed this memorial.

It will be recollectcd that two instances of discrepancy, between the tomb stone intended to record the deaths of Thomas Watt, and his wife, Margaret Sherrer, and several of their family, and the record of the kirk session, were pointed out in my first letter—one of these occurring in the year of the death, and the other in the age, of Margaret Sherrer. As the record of the kirk session seems to have been accurately kept, and as the tomb stone

was set up in 1701, and might be much obliterated during the period which intervened between that year and the year 1808, when the letters were “cleaned and repaired,” it is not be wondered at, that, in the hands of a person who might not have access to, or consulted the record, as seems to have been the case in this instance, but should trust to his reading of the stone, that mistakes should be committed. I assume, confidently, that an error has been committed in retracing the figures, under the authority of the letter, before recited, from Mr Watt; for the death of Thomas Watt, and that of Margaret Sherrer, are separated from each other, in the record, by eleven pages only, showing, indubitably, that twenty-one years could not have elapsed between these events. The birth of their illustrious grandson stands recorded in the same volume, at the distance only of eight pages farther on. The errors which have been pointed out, show with what care the restoration of inscriptions, when defaced, ought to be gone about, as gross blunders may otherwise be committed.

I am, Sir,

Your obt. Servant,

W.

Greenock, Aug. 23, 1838.

LETTER III.

JAMES WATT.

— Show'd him how to raise
His feeble force by the mechanic powers,
To dig the mineral from the vaulted earth,
On what to turn the piercing rage of fire,
On what the torrent, and the gather'd blast.

Thomson's Autumn.

To the Editor of the Greenock Advertiser.

SIR,—In my former letters I submitted some historical observations upon the grandfather and father of Mr Watt. Permit me now to say a few words in reference to himself:—

JAMES WATT, the celebrated engineer, was born in the town of Greenock, on the 19th of January, 1736.* Mr Watt, like most distinguished characters, attracted the notice of the public less during his lifetime, than he has done since his death. But, unlike the posthumous reputation of the generality of public men, his fame seems destined to grow by the lapse of time, and to occupy a prominent place, not alone in the history of science and of his own country, but to fill a page in the history of every nation to which the results of his inventive and happy genius shall be communicated, and to be restricted in its spread only by the limits of the globe itself.

* See Appendix.

Unfortunately, less is known of the early life of Mr Watt, even in his native town, than the admirers of his genius could wish ; as he removed from Greenock to Glasgow in 1752, when, of course, he was only sixteen years of age. From this circumstance, I infer that, although he might have attended his father's ship-chandlery shop, and amused himself among his father's workmen, he never was put to any handicraft in Greenock, and that, therefore, much as has been assumed on the subject, he never was, in strict speech, “a Greenock mechanic.” That Greenock has the honour of being his birth-place was perhaps never seriously disputed, although it has been alleged, in some publications, that Glasgow claimed him as a son, and, by not a few of his townsmen, it was maintained that he was born in Crawfordsdyke. It was while this point was undetermined, that the members of a club, composed of about a dozen of gentlemen residing in the town of Greenock, who had associated themselves for mutual improvement and social conversation, resolved to set the matter at rest by instituting an inquiry, not only with respect to the town which gave Mr Watt birth, but to ascertain, if possible, the very house in which he was born. For the purpose of showing how they proceeded in the accomplishment of these objects, I take leave to quote a passage from the recorded proceedings of the club :—

“ In the year 1820, the attention of the club was called to a consideration of the splendid talents of Mr James Watt, of Soho, whom they felt proud in being able to claim as a townsman, and who had, in the course of the preceding year, paid the debt of nature. Stimulated by the merits of a man, not less exemplary in morals than eminent in science —whose patriotism, too, was as conspicuous in practice as in sentiment ; and wishing, rather than expecting, to make themselves useful, by connecting the club with a name so auspicious, a resolution

was unanimously come to, that so fair an opportunity as now offered itself to take to themselves a designation, should be laid hold of, and they accordingly assumed the appellation of the ‘Watt Club.’

“ Identifying themselves, as they had thus done, with the name of so distinguished a philosopher, the club next directed their attention to discover, if possible, the house in which Mr Watt was born. They deemed this the more necessary, as, about that time, it had been asserted, in some of the public prints, that he was a native of Glasgow, and not a few, even of the people of Greenock, supposed he was born in Crawfordsdyke. At the period referred to, also, the interesting biographical memoir by his son, in the Supplement to the Encyclopædia Britannica, had not then appeared. The place of his birth was soon discovered. It was ascertained from proofs, both documentary and oral, the most unquestionable, that Mr Watt first drew the breath of life in a house which once occupied the site on which the Greenock Tavern was reared—where the club held their meetings, and instituted the inquiry which terminated in ascertaining so important a fact. A coincidence so extraordinary in itself, and at the same time so gratifying to the club, determined them to change the name of the house into that before-mentioned—the better to identify a spot which, for a long succession of years, will be pointed out to the admirers of genius, as the birth-place of Watt.

“ Successful in this undertaking, and desirous to do honour to a name which the town of Greenock can boast as its own, and which will be transmitted to posterity as that of one of the most illustrious benefactors of mankind, the club determined to express, by some public act, their admiration of Mr Watt’s character. It was thought that this might be best accomplished by way of a public dinner. Accordingly, upon the 19th of January, 1821, the

anniversary of Mr Watt's birth, and the next anniversary but one which occurred after his death, a dinner did take place, at which the chief magistrate of Greenock presided. It was attended by the most respectable of the inhabitants of Greenock, some of whom had been Mr Watt's personal and intimate friends. Thus, the town of Greenock had the honour of being the first publicly to recognise, by a tribute of gratitude to his memory, the extraordinary merits of James Watt.

"By the same agency, too, the public demonstrations of respect to the memory of Mr Watt, which subsequently took place in 1824 and 1827, were brought about."

It may be mentioned as a circumstance demonstrative of the respect in which the memory of Mr Watt was held, that, although the Town of Greenock, at the period of the first of these public dinners, was very much divided in the matter of burgh politics, yet, parties of all colours in politics, to the number of eighty, joined harmoniously and respectfully, on the anniversary of his birth, to honour the memory of their departed townsman.—Mr Jas. Walkinshaw, the correspondent of Mr Watt, and Mr Andrew Anderson, another of his friends, were of the number present.*

Such, then, were the motives of the club in instituting the inquiries before referred to, and the successful results of those inquiries. Were it not for the explanation above given, some apology might be thought necessary, on the part of the club, for designating *a tavern* by the respected name of Watt; but it will at once appear obvious they had no alternative, as they found it a tavern, and it still continues to be so occupied.

As the locality of Mr Watt's birth may be a matter fully as interesting to posterity as to the

* And it may be farther noticed, that the members of the *Watt Club* have, without a single omission, from the above date to the present time, held similar anniversary meetings.

present generation, I now take leave to lay before your readers the proofs I have gathered, to illustrate the subject under consideration. While I do this, I leave to more competent hands the task of appreciating his merits, and comparing his genius with other benefactors of mankind; nor shall I take it upon myself to assign the rank or title due to Mr Watt, in a national point of view, for his great and useful inventions, nor presume to say of him what the historian, Hume, said of Napier of Merchiston, “the famous inventor of the logarithms,” that he is “the person to whom the title of a GREAT MAN is more justly due than to any other whom his country has produced;”—yet, as James Watt, most unquestionably, is the greatest man whom Greenock has produced, a little indulgence will, I doubt not, be granted, while I detail, perhaps tediously, the evidence I have to adduce.

The house formerly called the Greenock Tavern, is built upon a piece of ground acquired in feu, in 1699, from Sir John Schaw, the superior of the town of Greenock, by “Alexander Scott, sometime mariner, afterwards merchant, in Greenock.” In 1727, Alexander Scott borrowed a sum of money from a Mrs Helen Taylor, and granted her a bond over this property, which then consisted of a tenement adapted for the accommodation of several families. The house fronted the sea, from which it was removed only by the breadth of an ordinary road. This road, in process of time, was called the High Street, and afterwards Dalrymple Street. The tenement in question is the last but one at the eastern termination of the south side of Dalrymple Street. There was a garden of some extent behind, which is now occupied by buildings.

Alexander Scott having found it inconvenient to repay Mrs Taylor the sum borrowed, that lady took upon herself the charge of collecting the rents of Mr Scott’s tenement, in liquidation of her bond. Mr Watt’s father was one of the tenants, and

here had his dwelling-house. I am in possession of an account-current, dated 20th May, 1734, between Mrs Taylor and Mr Scott, the debit side of which contains the interest due upon the said bond, and the credit side, the rents received by her. In this account Mr Watt's name appears as tenant, as far back as 1731.

Mr Watt's name also appears as a tenant, in another account in my possession, made up in reference to this debt, between a Mrs Hill, the heir of Mrs Taylor, who died 12th May, 1736, the debit side of which contains the interest of the bond for two years and a half, calculated up to the above date, and the credit side of which is made up of the rents received in payment. The following is an exact copy of the credit side of the account, so far as relates to the rents :—

By sundry rents received by Mrs Hill, viz. :—

James Watt,	.	.	.	£	5	0	0
James Williamson,	.	.	.	2	5	0	
William Simpson,	.	.	.	9	0	0	
William Caldwell,	.	.	.	6	0	0	
Archibald M'Aulay,	.	.	.	1	15	0	
Robert Crichton,	.	.	.	2	12	6	

Now, from these documents, it clearly appears that Mr Watt, senior, occupied a dwelling in Scott's tenement ; but as the account does not specify the term's possession, whether for the term of Whitsunday or the term of Martinmas, for which the above rents were received, I am left to infer that they were received for Martinmas (11th Nov.), 1735 ; and if so, then it follows, that this was the first term's rent of the year in which his son was born, as, according to the uniform practice of occupying houses in Scotland, the tenant in possession in November, would occupy the house from May, 1735, to May, 1736, the period embracing the birth-day of James Watt. In these accounts there is original documentary evidence of the point which I wish to establish ; but the proof does not rest upon these alone.

As it was conjectured that a fact so nearly connected with Mr Watt, as the place of his birth, would, in all probability, be communicated or known to Mr Walkinshaw, Mr Watt's friend and correspondent, he was applied to for information on the subject. Mr Walkinshaw at once pointed out the house before referred to, as occupying the site of the old tenement in which Mr Watt was born ; but no attempt was made to overcome Mr Walkinshaw's well-known disinclination to committing himself to writing, and no written document from him was obtained to record his testimony ; but a gentleman, who felt an interest in the matter, and who was requested to be present at the conversation, very kindly, at my request, wrote me the letter, which I now take leave to transcribe :—

“ *Greenock, Feb. 21, 1827.* ”

“ MY DEAR SIR,—I distinctly remember calling upon the late Mr James Walkinshaw along with you—I think in the summer of 1822—when the old gentleman pointed out, in the most precise and conclusive terms, the house at present partly occupied as the James Watt Tavern, in William Street, as standing upon the site of that in which Mr Watt, of Soho, was born. The circumstances stated by Mr Walkinshaw in corroboration, were, in my mind, at the time, completely demonstrative of the correctness of the fact.—I am, my dear Sir, yours faithfully,

“ JOHN MENNONS.” *

Being anxious to obtain as much evidence as possible on the subject, the late Mr Walter Ritchie, who had filled the office of magistrate in Greenock, was next applied to. He likewise distinctly corroborated the information which I had previously obtained from Mr Walkinshaw, and very readily addressed to me the following letter :—

* Editor of the *Greenock Advertiser.*

“Greenock, 7th Aug., 1824.

“DEAR SIR,—When I was connected with the magistracy of Greenock, the late Mr James Watt, of Birmingham, the improver of the steam-engine, with whom I was acquainted, came to this town. As we were walking together, when at, or nearly opposite, the shop lately possessed by Mr Campbell, in Wilson’s Land, he pointed out to me the house in which he was born. It was an old tenement, nearly opposite the said shop, having one of its gables to Dalrymple Street, and a small window in that gable. It was then an old tenement, has been re-built, and, I understand, is now the property of Mrs Cambridge.—I am, dear Sir, your most obedient servant,

“WALTER RITCHIE.”*

Such then are the proofs, as now collected, of the birth-place of James Watt; and although the fact stands at present undisputed, at some future period it may be called in question, and evidence required of what is now advanced. It is for the purpose of anticipating the objection, and showing that the locality which I would have consecrated to native genius—to Watt—is not without the distinction I ascribe to it, that I have submitted the original documents above referred to, and the letters I have transcribed, to the examination of the public. The evidence which these writings afford, in a matter which I deem of some importance, may be weighed and critically tested, while, as yet, the event they relate to is comparatively recent.

I reserve for my next communication, what further I have to submit on the subject of this letter.

I am, Sir,

Your obt. Servant,

W.

Greenock, 5th Nov., 1838.

* Mr Ritchie was an enterprising merchant, and extensive shipowner in Greenock. He was chosen a councillor of the burgh 5th August, 1788, and elected a magistrate on 2d October, 1799.

LETTER IV.

JAMES WATT.

To the Editor of the Greenock Advertiser.

SIR,—I beg leave to send you, for insertion in your paper, the following notices of the life of Mr Watt, in continuation of my letter of the 5th curt.

In early youth, Mr Watt was subject to the inconvenience of a delicate constitution of body. This naturally inclined him to withdraw from the boisterous and stirring amusements indulged in by the youth of a seaport town. His time was devoted to domestic retirement. As might be expected, his mother treated him with indulgence and anxious solicitude. Having no daughters, he was much in her society ; and a remark of hers, in reference to this, was remembered by one of my venerable informants, who told me that Mrs Watt was heard more than once to say that the want of a daughter was supplied by the society and attentions of her son, James. But a predilection so gratifying to the mother, and so honourable to the filial piety of the son, drew upon him the ridicule and sneers of his youthful compeers, who stigmatised him by an appellation descriptive of what they deemed his effeminate manner of spending his time. Nor did their persecution of him terminate there, and persecution it must have been, as every ingenuous youth, who has suffered similar treatment, must have felt, and will readily acknowledge ; for when, in the course

of his education, he was under the necessity of associating, to a certain extent, with his class fellows,—the softness of his disposition—his partiality for sober and rational conversation—and absence from the play-ground—was resented by his school-mates, who applied to him the epithet, “*haveril*,”* thus showing how incapable they were of distinguishing the workings of a great mind—at once retiring, modest, and simple, the usual accompaniments of true genius—from puerile imbecility.†

It happened, however, to this delicate youth, as it has happened in the history of many great men and eminent scholars. His retired habits, if they did not produce a taste, at least gave leisure, for study and self-improvement; and, it is said, he was of a studious and contemplative disposition. I have been informed that he was particularly fond of astronomy, and in the practice of resorting to that fine grove, composed of elms and beeches, which at one time adorned the rising ground behind the Mid Parish Church, now occupied by Regent Street, and Shaw Place, for the purpose of contemplating the stars. As it is said he lay on his back while so engaged, it is probable that he did so the better to steady whatever instrument he employed in his survey of the heavens.

* *Haveril*—“One who habitually talks in a foolish or incoherent manner.”—*Jamieson’s Dictionary of the Scots Language*.

† The deceased James Gammel, Esq., of Countesswells, banker in Greenock, was my author for this fact. Mr Gammel was a contemporary of James Watt, younger, and one of his school-fellows. Mr Gammel was born on 12th December, 1735, and so was just thirty-eight days older than Mr Watt. He survived Mr Watt by several years. Mr Gammel’s expression was “*Haveril Jamie Watt*.”

‡ Mrs Leitch, a venerable lady, who lived to see two of her sons successively fill the office of chief magistrate of the town of Greenock, confirmed to me the erroneous estimate which the youthful companions of young Watt made of his mind. She informed me he was wont to be called “*Miss Watt—Jenny Watt*,” from the softness of his disposition, and his supposed want of manliness. Mrs Leitch was born on the 10th Aug., 1746, and died 25th May, 1833.

In tracing the tastes and predilections of distinguished men to their source, and the developments of genius to their first impulse, it sometimes happens that unimportant and apparently trivial circumstances are laid hold of to account for a particular bent of mind. In the case of Mr Watt, if I may be allowed a conjecture, his taste for mathematical instruments—the construction of which became his future occupation—was produced, and his trials of their uses were suggested, by the quadrants, compasses, and other astronomical instruments, which were to be seen in his father's warehouse or shop, and which curiosity may have induced him to examine, or duty may have assigned to him to repair. Certain it is, that he employed himself in constructing machinery of some sort before he removed from under his father's roof. The late Mr John Rodger, ship-joiner and block-maker—whose father, James Rodger, served an apprenticeship under Bailie Watt, and who produced to me a fragment of his father's indenture with that gentleman, bearing to have been discharged 22d September, 1734,—informed me that, when he was a boy, and working along with his father, while a journeyman in Mr Watt's service, he recollects, on one occasion, being put to clear out the lumber of a garret in Mr Watt's house, and finding there what seemed to him to be “barrel organs, models of cranes, &c. &c.,” which, he was told, had been made by Mr Watt's son, then in business in Glasgow. Mr Watt had a small forge in his father's shop, at which he was wont to amuse himself. This fact I had from another quarter.

Mr Watt received the rudiments of his education from Robert Arrol, teacher of the grammar school of Greenock, and the author of an elegant translation of Cornelius Nepos, published in 1744, with a vocabulary, chronological table, and erudite notes. Mr Arrol also translated Eutropius, and Select Colloquies of Erasmus. The preceptor of Mr

Watt, in mathematics, was John Marr. Mr Marr seems to have been in some way domesticated in the family of Sir John Schaw formerly referred to. I have seen Mr Marr's subscription, as a witness, to some charters granted by Sir John in 1751. In these deeds, Mr Marr is designated "Mathematician in Greenock." Nothing further is known of him than what appears from the records of the society of free-masons, known by the appellation of "Greenock Kilwinning No. 11," of which he was a brother, that he was initiated into the mysteries of the craft in the city of Glasgow. To have recorded more of this mathematical preceptor, on his own account as well as that of his pupil, would have been gratifying, and that gratification would acquire considerable increase, if a relationship could be traced up from him to the John Marr,* the mathematician, who was the friend of the great Napier, of Merchiston.

* The John Marr here referred to, was a mathematician in the household of King James the VI. The following anecdote, as related by him to Lilly, a contemporary, is extracted from that excellent work, the "Memoirs of John Napier, of Merchiston," by Mark Napier, Esq., advocate, and is worthy of repetition, in treating of important discoveries and improvements in mechanics, though these were less germane to mathematics than they seem to be. Lilly writes thus to Elias Ashmole:—"I will acquaint you with one memorable story related to me by John Marr, an excellent mathematician and geometrician, whom I conceive you remember. He was servant to King James First, and Charles First. When Merchiston first published his Logarithms, Mr Briggs, then reader of the astronomy lectures at Gresham College, in London, afterwards of Oxford, was so surprised with admiration of them, that he could have no quietness in himself till he had seen that noble person, whose only invention they were. He acquaints John Marr therewith, who went into Scotland before Mr Briggs, purposely to be there when these two so learned persons should meet. Mr Briggs appointed a certain day when to meet in Edinburgh, but failing thereof, Merchiston was fearful he would not come. It happened one day as John Marr and the Lord Napier were speaking of Mr Briggs—'Oh ! John,' saith Merchiston, 'Mr Briggs will not come now ;' at the very instant, one knocks at the gate,—John Marr hasted down,—and it proved to be Mr Briggs, to his great contentment. He brings Mr Briggs into my Lord's chamber, where almost one quarter of an hour was spent, each beholding other with admiration, before one word was spoken. At last, Mr Briggs began—' My Lord, I have undertaken this long journey purposely to see your person, and to know by what engine

Although it be not within the compass of my design, in writing of Mr Watt, to treat of his mechanical qualifications, yet, as the circumstance I am about to mention, occurred on board of one of the earlier steamers on the Clyde, I may introduce it into this letter. In the course of a voyage which Mr Watt made to Rothesay, in a steam-boat, in company with his friend, Mr James Walkinshaw, who mentioned the anecdote in my hearing, Mr Watt entered into conversation with the engineer, and pointed out to him the way of "backing" the engine. With a foot rule Mr Watt demonstrated to him what he meant ; and at last, under the impulse of his ruling passion, threw off his great coat, and put his hand to the engine himself, to show the practical application of his lecture. This took place on Mr Watt's last visit to Greenock. Before this, I understand the "back-stroke" of the engine was either unknown, or not generally acted on. When the Comet* arrived at Greenock in the summer of 1812, such a power in the engine was not exercised—if known—and the engine was usually stopped at some distance from the quay, to allow the vessel's speed gradually to decrease.

I pretend not to determine whether or not the back-stroke was, like his great improvement, an original suggestion of Mr Watt's. If it was, the improvement was soon introduced into all the boats

of wit and ingenuity you came first to think of this most excellent help unto astronomy, namely, the Logarithms ; but my Lord, being by you found out, I wonder nobody else found it before, when now being known, it appears so easy.' He was nobly entertained by Lord Napier ; and every summer after that, during the Laird's being alive, this venerable man went purposely to Scotland to visit him."

* In referring to the Comet, it would be unpardonable to omit mentioning *Henry Bell*. Without at all putting him in contrast with James Watt, or entering into the dispute between the former and Mr Miller of Dalswinton, or Mr Taylor, as to priority of the application of steam to navigation, permission may be taken just to state, that the "Watt Club," of which Mr Bell was a member, caused a portrait of Mr Bell to be painted by Mr Fleming, another of their number, to mark their sense of Mr Bell's merits. The portrait is hung up in the Town Hall of Greenock.

on the Clyde. I have heard it insinuated, though certainly not very generally, that Mr Watt's improvements would soon be made by some other person, had *he* not happened to make them. It is doubtless within the compass of possibility that this might have taken place; and, to use the quaint phraseology of Mr Briggs, the mathematical professor of Oxford, in relation to the logarithms, the “engine of wit and ingenuity” of some other person might have thought “of this excellent help unto” navigation, and the “wonder is nobody else found it before, when now being known, it appears so easy.” The same, or similar, objections were made to the discoveries of Columbus, Napier, Hervey, and Newton, and will, I doubt not—such is the infirmity of our nature—continue to be made to the inventions, discoveries and improvements of the master minds of men while the world lasts.

I stated in a former letter, that Mr Watt corresponded with the late Mr James Walkinshaw, of Greenock. This gentleman was a retired merchant, and every way fitted for the agency which Mr Watt devolved upon him. To those who were intimate with him, his quaint remarks and terse humour will be long remembered. In the letters addressed to him by Mr Watt, evidence is to be found of a certain morbid antipathy to rendering accounts, which possessed Mr Walkinshaw’s mind. Having what he considered a competency, he was little careful to increase his store by plaguing himself with business. He had all his time, therefore, at the disposal of his friends, or for the gratification of a simple uniform routine of amusement. That he was most attentive to those he ranked as his friends, several can bear testimony; in particular, his offices of kindness to a gentleman, whom lameness confined to his chamber, were very exemplary.* After Mr Watt’s death, Mr Walkinshaw was grati-

* The late Captain Js. Ramsay, father-in-law of Ninian Hill, Esq. M.D.

fied in having sent to him a favourite vest which had belonged to the former, and which, with an allowable pride, he was wont to show upon his own person. Mr Walkinshaw was remarkably neat, clean, and gentlemanly in his personal appearance.

In my communication concerning the father of Mr Watt, I gave at length a letter of the 27th June, 1808, from Mr Watt to Mr Walkinshaw, relative to the tomb-stone in the West Church-yard. I now take the opportunity of submitting another letter addressed to the same individual, on the same subject, and also announcing the death of Mr Boulton. It is as follows :—

“ *Glenarback, Aug. 22, 1809.* ”

“ DEAR SIR,—I have been in this country about a fortnight. My stay is uncertain—circumstances may make it short, and it is probable I may not come to Greenock this time. I shall also be glad to know whether my father’s tombstone has been placed as I directed—how my cousin A—— does, and if you can give me any information concerning Mrs W——, her daughter and family, with intelligence concerning any of my other friends in your place. I shall stay here about a week, after which I go to visit my friend Mr Muirhead, on the Water of Endrick; but letters directed for me at Miss M’Gregor’s, No. 9, Cochran Street, Glasgow, will be forwarded to me; and it will give me pleasure to hear of your and Miss Walkinshaw’s welfare—not forgetting my much esteemed friend Mrs Shaw, and her family.*

“ I am at present very much distressed by having yesterday received the account of the death of my very worthy friend, Mr Boulton, sen., who has been long painfully afflicted, but is now relieved from his sufferings. There are few better men existing, and

* When Mr Watt was in the habit of visiting Greenock, he usually sent for and entertained, in the Tontine Inn, a party of old friends, among whom were the daughters of the late Rev. John Shaw, Minister of the Mid Parish of Greenock.

none who have been of more use to society. He had attained the venerable age of 81; but several of the last years of his life have been embittered by a very painful and incurable malady.

"I left my son, and other friends, at Birmingham, well; and Mrs Watt and I enjoy as good health as our time of life admits; though she has had the misfortune to lose the sight of one of her eyes, yet it has been without pain.

"Mrs Watt joins me in best wishes to you and Miss Walkinshaw, and with kind remembrances to other friends.

"I remain,

"Dear Sir,

"Your obedient Servant,

"JAMES WATT."

The following letter, addressed to the same gentleman, tends to show Mr Watt's considerate remembrance of his friends and relations:—

"*Heathfield, Feb. 14, 1811.*

"MY DEAR SIR,—I blame myself much for not answering your very kind letter, of July 4th, sooner. I was in the act of setting out for Wales when I received it. I made a month's stay there, and many things occurred to make me neglect it since, till the annual time of settling my accounts brought it before me. Permit me to hope that you will forgive my omission, which has been more caused by the failure of recollection, than by any want of a due sense of my obligations to you on this and other occasions.

"I found, on questioning your friend Mr S_____, that he had not that genius for mechanics he had flattered himself to have; and as there was no likelihood of his obtaining as good a salary here as he enjoyed in Greenock, I thought I could not do him more kindness than by advising him to endeavour to get into some merchant's counting-house, either in Liverpool, or in Scotland; in consequence of which

he went from hence to Liverpool, since which I have not heard of him.

“ I am to thank you for your very great care and attention to my poor cousin A——, and observe your account of her funeral charge, which is very moderate, and which I am very sorry my neglect has kept you so long out of. If you will favour me with a copy of my account-current with you to this date, I shall send you an order upon Mr Archibald Hamilton, jun., who will pay it you. Till I received his account the other day, I thought you would have drawn upon him, as I requested you, but nothing is charged in that account.

“ In respect to the seat in the kirk, please to sell it for what you can get, and send me a form of a proper assignation, which I will sign and return.

“ I have heard nothing of Mrs B. since you wrote. I hope she arrived safe, and with her husband is doing well. I shall be glad to hear how her mother is, and if she has enough to support her. If that should not be the case, please to inform me what help may be wanted from me; meanwhile, please to remember me to her.

“ I have had but indifferent health in the latter part of summer and fall, and have had some very bad colds in the winter, and am now very much better, perhaps as well as I ought to expect to be; and do not go much out.

“ Mrs Watt seems to have quite recovered her broken arm—her sight continues much as it was, at least not materially worse; and, though she has had some colds and rheumatism this winter, she is now tolerably well;—we are old folks, and cannot expect to be quite so. Thank God, we enjoy, on the whole, better health than most people of our age.

“ I beg you will remember me kindly to any enquiring friends at Greenock, and also to our good friends at Paisley, Mr Love and Bailie Barclay, when you see or write to them.

“ Mrs Watt joins me in very best wishes to you

and Miss Walkinshaw, and you will oblige me very much by writing to me soon. Do not imitate the bad example I have set you.

“I remain,

“My Dear Sir,

“Yours sincerely,

“JAMES WATT.”

The following letter was written in answer to a communication made to Mr Watt, by an ingenious gentleman in Greenock,* on the subject of a clock or machine, which it was proposed to erect at the Custom-house of Greenock, the moving power of which was to be the wind; and which clock was to indicate the hour of the day, the art of the wind, and the state of the tide:—

“Glasgow, Oct. 18, 1815.

“SIR,—In reply to your letter of the 12th, my age and the state of my health do not permit me to enter fully into the subject of your letter. The contrivance you mention does not seem to me entirely new. Clocks have been made which have been wound by the action of the tide by running water—by the rise and fall of the barometer, and I believe by the wind—and watches which have been wound up by the motion of the person who carried them—but all these methods have, for some reason or other, been found more curious than useful. I have seen more than one excellent clock which has drawn upon a piece of vellum—changed annually the rise and fall of the barometer; and there is somewhere, I believe, in some of the early volumes of the memoirs of the French Academy, descriptions of clocks to keep register of the directions and force of the wind, and various other meteorological matters. I conceive that an ingenious mechanic would not find great difficulty in executing the machine you

* Mr Colin Buchanan.

mention ; but it would occupy much time and attention, and would be expensive, and I doubt whether its utility would be commensurate to these circumstances.

“ If, however, you should think your ideas worthy of being followed any further, after making proper drawings, I would recommend a model to be made of a tolerable size before you proceed further.

“ I remain, Sir,

“ Your obedient Servant,

“ JAMES WATT.”

This letter, which was written but three or four years before Mr Watt’s death, shows that, even at his then advanced age, he took an interest in any thing connected with mechanics.

Mr Watt paid a visit to his native town in 1815. While in Greenock, on that occasion, he happened, in company with his friend Mr Walkinshaw, to step into the shop of the late Mr John Heron, watch-maker and jeweller, when his attention was attracted by a water-colour painting of a group of shells, there exhibited for public inspection. Having inquired by whom the painting had been executed, and being informed that the artist was a youth then serving an apprenticeship to a respectable teacher in Greenock,* he made inquiry whether there were any other young men of promising talents in town, and whether it was thought native genius might not be stimulated by a little fostering and encouragement? The answers he received to these interrogatories seemed to be so satisfactory, that, before he left town, he communicated to Mr Andrew Anderson,† and to Mr James Watt,‡ brewer in Crawfordsdyke, his intention to make a donation of a sum of money

* Mr Colin Buchanan, Teacher of Writing and Drawing.

† Mr Anderson was brother to the founder of the Andersonian University in Glasgow.

‡ Mr Watt, although not related to Dr. Watt, was in habits of intimacy with him for several years.

for the purchase of books, “to form the beginning of a scientific library for the instruction of the youth of Greenock.”

Accordingly, on his return home, he addressed to Mr Anderson a letter, stating the steps he had taken towards carrying his project into execution, and giving a detail of the rules he wished to be observed in instituting and continuing in existence the proposed scientific library. The following is a copy of the letter :—

“ *Heathfield, Birmingham, Jan. 12, 1816.*

“ Andrew Anderson, Esq. Greenock.

“ MY DEAR SIR,—In consequence of your obliging consent to act for me in the following business, I applied to my friend Mr Watt, of Crawfordsdyke, to join you in it, which he kindly agreed to, and mentioned the Rev. Dr. Scott as a proper coadjutor in the choice of the books, which I approved of; but not being personally acquainted with that gentleman, and the shortness of my stay not permitting an introduction, I begged he would mention it to him, and request his consent to my naming him as one of my trustees in it.

“ As I had not then made out a draft of the conditions on which I proposed to give the money, I left it with my friend Mr Walkinshaw to deposit in the bank, until I should have time to consider the subject. An accumulation of business, from my long absence, and other matters which a younger man would probably have soon dispatched, have made me delay doing so until the present time.

“ I now request that, at your convenience, you will consult with the above-named gentlemen and Mr Walkinshaw, and make the following proposal on my part :—

“ James Watt, of Heathfield, in the county of Stafford, L.L.D., offers to the magistrates and town council of Greenock, the sum of One Hundred

Pounds sterling, on the following conditions, which he hopes they will do him the favour to agree to :

“ 1st, That the said sum shall be laid out upon books, for the use of the Mathematical School of Greenock, which books shall be such as treat of natural philosophy and mathematics, and more especially upon geometry, mechanics, astronomy, navigation, the motion, resistance, and other properties of fluids, statics, and the science and art of ship-building.

“ 2^d, That a catalogue shall be made of the said books, signed by the guardians thereof, hereby appointed, and the books shall be marked and numbered, in some durable manner, as belonging to the mathematical school ; and they shall be kept in some proper place, under the care of the master of the said school.

“ 3^d, That if any of the said books shall be lost or destroyed, the magistrates and town council shall engage, for themselves and their successors in office, that the same shall be replaced at the public expense of the said town.

“ 4th, That a small annual subscription be exacted from each scholar using the said books, in order to add to their number, and to make up for tear and wear.

“ 5th, That the Rev. Dr. Scott, one of the ministers of Greenock, Messrs Andw. Anderson, James Watt of Crawfordsdyke, and James Walkinshaw, along with the master of said school for the time being, and any two other gentlemen who shall be named for that purpose by the said magistrates, shall be the purchasers and guardians of the said books, and whenever the four guardians first above-named, by death, resignation, or disability, shall be reduced to two, then, it shall be lawful for the remaining two, to choose two others in their place ; and at all times hereafter, when similar vacancies shall occur, they shall be supplied by other proper persons chosen by the surviving trustees ; and, in

like manner, the said magistrates shall, from time to time, supply any deficiency which shall occur in the guardians to be appointed by them.

“6th, That at any time, or times hereafter, it shall be competent to the said magistrates, with the advice and consent of the major part of the said guardians, for the time being, to make some additional rules and regulations, relative to the use and preservation of the said books, as shall to them seem meet and proper.

“7th, That an act of sederunt shall be entered in the town’s books, agreeing to the above terms, and confirming the same; and an attested copy thereof shall be transmitted to the said James Watt of Heathfield.

“My intention, in this donation, is to form the beginning of a scientific library, for the instruction of the youth of Greenock; and I hope it will prompt others to add to it, and to render my townsmen as eminent for their knowledge, as they are for their spirit of enterprize. These being my views, they induce me to hope for your, and the other gentlemen I have named, assisting me in it, and that the magistrates and council will honour my proposal with their countenance and acceptance.

“I send inclosed Mr Walkinshaw’s receipt, upon the production of which he will pay the money, and any interest the bank may have allowed for the same.

“Mrs Watt joins me in offering our compliments and best wishes to you, Mrs Anderson and family, begging to be kindly remembered to your brother and other friends.—And I remain, with sincere regard and esteem,

“ My Dear Sir,

“ Your obliged Friend and Servant,

“ JAMES WATT.”

On the 7th Feb., 1816, Quintin Leitch, Esq.,* then chief magistrate of the town of Greenock, laid Mr Watt's letter to Mr Anderson before the council of the burgh, when a minute of acceptance was recorded in the following words :—

“ And the object Dr. Watt has in view, marking distinctly a kind remembrance of his native town, a benevolence of heart, and an unceasing regard for the progress of science, the council with pleasure agree to accept of the proposed deposit, and to follow out the plan of the donor.”

How far the magistrates and council have fulfilled the conditions stipulated by Mr Watt, and undertaken to be performed by them, in reference to the above-mentioned donation, I am not so well informed, at present, as to be able to say ; but it is to be hoped that, if the institution of the scientific library should happen to be in abeyance, from the decease of all the originally named guardians, or from any other cause, no time will be lost, on the part of those intrusted with the nomination of the guardians, in putting the affairs of the library on a proper footing, and thus following “ out the plan of the donor.”

The following letter was written by Mr Watt to Mr Walkinshaw, with three engraved copies of his portrait :—

“ *Heathfield, Oct. 29, 1816.* ”

“ MY DEAR SIR,—I send you, by Miss M‘Gregor, three copies of Cadel and Davies’ engraving of my portrait—one for yourself, one for Mr Andrew An-

* Mr Leitch was a skilful projector and active promoter of the improvements of the town. To him mainly it is owing that the town of Greenock, at present, possesses what I have no doubt will one day or other be found a most improvable territory, viz., the sand bank in the river opposite to the harbour of Greenock. A grant of this valuable property was obtained from the Barons of Exchequer, by charter, dated 5th July, 1816. Mr John Scott, a late eminent ship-builder, who acted as “ sheriff in that part,” in the ceremony of giving infestment of the bank, on 3d April, 1817, proclaimed it upon the spot by the appellation of “ Saint Quintin’s isle.”

derson, and one for Mr M'Goun,* which I beg may be presented to them with my best respects. They are not very like ; and the picture from which they were taken was done when I was much younger than I now am. They are, however, the best which have been done, and as such, I hope you will accept them.

"I shall be glad to hear from you of your welfare, and that of my other friends, to all of whom I request to be remembered, especially to my cousin Mrs W., of whom I shall be glad to hear, and of her daughter and family. Please remember me also to Mr Love and Bailie Barclay.

"Miss M'Gregor will inform you of Mrs Watt's and my health, which, though not perfect, is perhaps better than we have a right to expect at our age.

"Mrs Watt joins me in best wishes to you, Miss Walkinshaw and other friends, and I remain,

" My Dear Sir,

" Your sincere friend,

" JAMES WATT."

It is not without extreme regret that I am obliged to conclude these brief notices of Mr Watt, from want of suitable materials to enable me to continue the narrative. Scanty and inadequate to the full elucidation of the life of Mr Watt as these scraps may be, I trust they will be found of some service to the biographer of Watt, when a life of him, on an enlarged plan, shall be undertaken ; for I cannot allow myself to think that a desideratum in the history of mechanics, from a pen competent to the task, will remain much longer unexecuted.†

As I have given the inscriptions upon the tomb-

* The late Mr John M'Goun, Merchant, Greenock, married to Mr Walkinshaw's niece.

† This, of course, was written before the " *Eloge Historique de James Watt par M. Arago, secrétaire perpétuel de l'académie des sciences*," made its appearance.

stones of the father and grandfather of Mr Watt, I may conclude this letter by giving the inscription upon the monument erected over the ground in which his own ashes are deposited. Mr Watt is buried at Handsworth Church, near Birmingham. A gothic chapel, about twelve feet by eight, is built over the cemetery, on which is the following inscription :—

J A M E S W A T T
B O R N
xix J A N V A R Y
M D C C X X X V I
D I E D
x x v A V G V S T
M D C C C X I X
—
P A T R I O P T I M E M E R I T O
F : M : P : —

I am, Sir,
Your obedient Servant,

W.

Greenock, 20th Nov., 1838.

P O S T S C R I P T.

ALTHOUGH the foregoing letters contain, with a little new matter, all that was published in the *Greenock Advertiser*, regarding the Watt family, and all I profess to republish in this form—yet as a compilation, like the present, which has already given copies of the inscriptions over the graves of the illustrious dead, might be thought still more imperfect than it is, if it omitted to add copies of such other inscriptions, in reference to the great mechanist, as are known to be extant—particularly, as these are from the pens of the most eminent literary characters of the age, and, on that account, exclude the necessity of any apology for their insertion—I take leave to give a copy of the inscription in Westminster Abbey—the composition of Lord Brougham—commemorative of the talents and virtues of Mr Watt. It is as follows :—

Not to perpetuate a name
 which must endure while the peaceful arts flourish,
 but to shew
 that mankind have learnt to honour those
 who best deserve their gratitude,
 the King,
 his Ministers, and many of the Nobles
 and Commoners of the Realm,
 raised this Monument to

JAMES WATT,

who directing the force of an original genius,
 early exercised in philosophic research,
 to the improvement of
 the Steam Engine,
 enlarged the resources of his country,
 increased the power of man,
 and rose to an eminent place
 among the illustrious followers of Science,
 and the real benefactors of the world.

Born at Greenock MDCCXXXVI.

Died at Heathfield in Staffordshire, MDCCCXIX.

And what follows is a literal copy of the inscription—from the pen of Lord Jeffrey—placed on the pedestal of the statue of Mr Watt in the Greenock Library :—

THE
 INHABITANTS OF GREENOCK
 HAVE ERECTED THIS STATUE OF

JAMES WATT,

NOT TO EXTEND A FAME
 ALREADY IDENTIFIED WITH
 THE MIRACLES OF STEAM,
 BUT TO TESTIFY
 THE PRIDE AND REVERENCE
 WITH WHICH HE IS REMEMBERED
 IN THE PLACE OF HIS NATIVITY,
 AND THEIR DEEP SENSE
 OF THE GREAT BENEFITS
 HIS GENIUS HAS CONFERRED
 ON MANKIND.

BORN XIX JANUARY, MDCCXXXVI.
 DIED AT HEATHFIELD,
 IN STAFFORDSHIRE,
 AUGUST XXV, MDCCCXIX.

As the inhabitants of Greenock are proud of possessing a statue which challenges general admiration, it may, in conclusion, be noticed, that this masterpiece of Sir F. Chantry was brought from London, in the ship William Nicol, a Greenock built vessel. The William Nicol had previously performed a voyage from Calcutta to London; she arrived in the Clyde on the 19th September, 1838. The statue, on its way from London, was insured against sea risk at £2,000.

G. W.

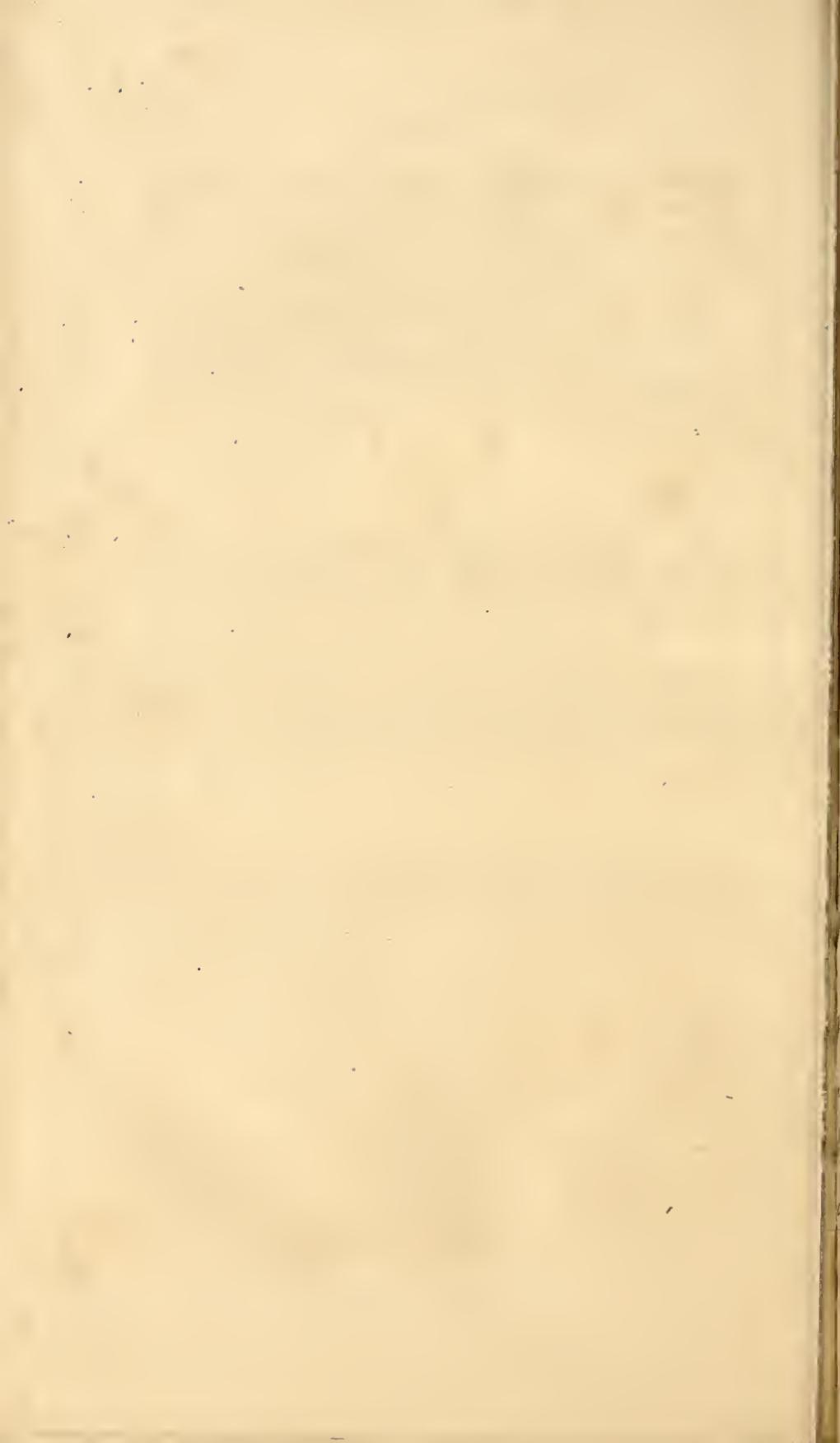
Fac simile of the hand writing of
Thomas Watt.

Court Holden att draw furd sy h^e
the 23 of July 1705 Arch: murk: Baylye: Wm: Gars: ffle:
all & Thomas Watt clk pro tempore. Curia affirmata legitime

Complaint Wm: Gars: from Baylye on son Henry Carpenter that when
- on and or oyr of the daye off may last past Mr: D: son Henry M: Read, Cris:
= Jam: m: noit Baylye for with the D: ought to be punished according to law to
= the terror of oyr to reme the p: & r & r.

The Baylye having heard & considered the p: doff
find the same relevant to be proved, prove & juve therfor
referr the verity of the lybotes to said p: particular defendant
oath & & r

Archibald Murchie
Tho: Watt. Cloark, pri: tempo;



Fac simile of the hand writing of John Watt, eldest son
of Thomas Watt, and of the signatures of both of these
individuals:-

At The Manner Place of Cartburn
The Martimas Head Court Holden there on the 15 of
November 1712 years

By Thomas Watt Baylie for this head court
The Court Henced and Rolls called
The 9th day the Brewers Tenents and Subtenents Being
called upon Lawfull warning &c &c

Jo Watt

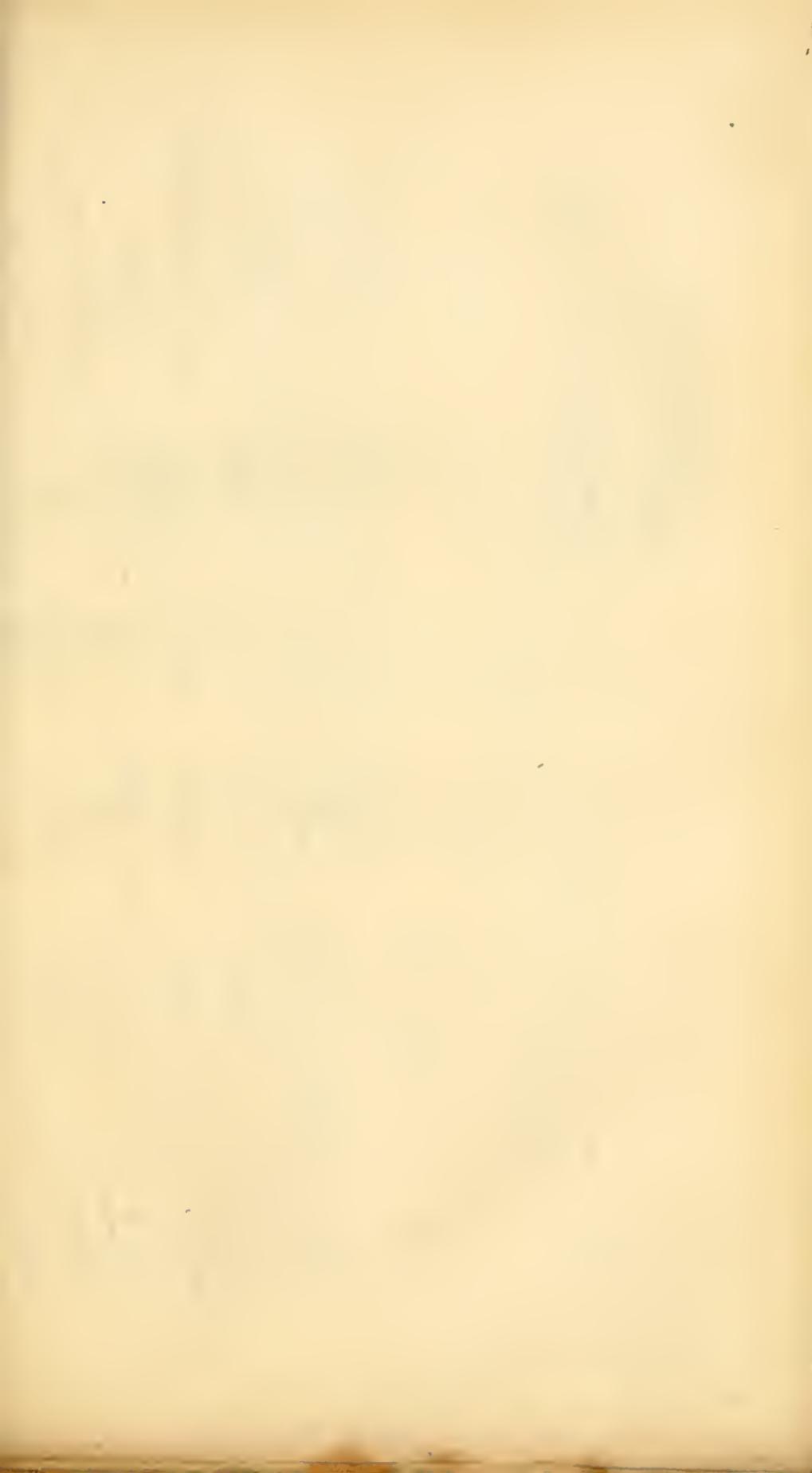
Thos Watt

Fac simile of the hand writing of James Watt
youngest son of Thomas Watt.

Greenock March 23rd 1748

Received from Mr
William Alexander full payment
of £ above two pounds Seven
shillings Sterling as full off
above account

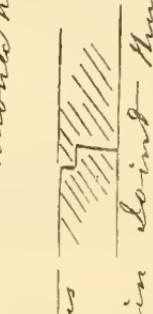
Ja. Watt



Mr James Wallins house
Greenwich _____ }

Heathfield Down 27 " 1000

Dear Sir

I send you enclosed the inscription intended
for my father's gravestone, which I shall be obliged to you to get neatly
executed in the same form as written. I mention having the two
stones rebated upon one another thus  and on consideration
it will be better to make them plain being thus 
when the weather becomes milder, I wish also to have the letters
cleaned & repaired upon my grandfather's stone)

I shall thank you to get me
workman to do no time in getting it finished otherwise it is
possible a stone may be laid upon me before I have laid one on
my father.

I shall be glad to hear from you of the receipt of this letter
mean while Mr. Watt joins me in best congs^ts of good wishes to
you & Miss Halloway, with remembrances to other friends, and
I remain

Dear Sir

Your obliged

humble servt

James Watt



APPENDIX.

(1.)

Extracts from the Register of Burials in the Old or West Parish of Greenock.

February, 1734.

Thomas Watt, Teacher of Navigation in C-r, died the 27th,
aged about 95 years.

March, 1735.

Margt. Sherrer, spouse to the deceased Thomas Watt, Mathematician in C-r, died the 21st, aged 84 years.

Extracts from the Register of Births in the Old or West Parish of Greenock.

February 3, 1699.

James—Son lawll—to Thomas Watt, Mathematician in Carsdyke, and Margt. Shearer, was born Jan. 28, and baptized Feb. 5, as Witness James Hill, son to James Hill, Mert. in Greenock, and Joseph Rankin, son to Thomas Rankin, Mert. there.

Joseph Rankin, witness.

James Hill, witness.

January, 1736.

James—Son lawll—to James Watt, Wright in G-r, and Agnes Muireheid, his spouse, was born the 19th, and baptized the 25th.

Sept. 1739.

John—Son lawll—to James Watt, Wright in G-r, and Agnes Muirhead, his spouse, born 1st.

(2.)

Report, from the Greenock Advertiser, of Proceedings of a Meeting, held in the Assembly-Rooms, Greenock, for the purpose of deliberating on the erection of a Monument to the Memory of the late James Watt, Esquire.

REPORT.

AT a General Meeting of the Subscribers to the Fund, for erecting a Monument to the memory of the late JAMES WATT, Esq. of Heathfield, held within the Assembly Rooms, on the 30th August, 1826, called by public advertisement, to determine on the appropriation of the money subscribed—Sir MICHAEL SHAW STEWART, of Greenock and Blackhall, Baronet, was, on the motion of Bailie Leitch, unanimously called to the Chair.

The Chairman shortly stated the object of the meeting, and spoke to the following effect:—

“ I have, in the first place, to thank the meeting for the honour of being thus called to the chair ; I have also to explain the object of this meeting called so suddenly, perhaps too suddenly. It is to determine on the appropriation of the funds which have been subscribed towards the erection of a monument to the memory of the illustrious James Watt. Mr James Watt of Soho, the son of that distinguished person, called on me two days ago, when he intimated, that, being aware of the intention of the inhabitants of Greenock to erect a monument to the memory of his father, it would be most gratifying to his feelings that a statue by the chissel of the celebrated Chantry should be chosen. I am aware (Sir Michael continued), that there exists a difference of opinion with regard to what would be the most appropriate monument ; but I am persuaded, that knowing, as we now do, what are the sentiments of the son of that great man, as to what would be the most appropriate tribute to his memory in the place of his birth, and taking into view the munificent donation that will shortly be announced from that gentleman, all difference of opinion will vanish, and the whole of the subscribers will, as I for one feel gratified in doing, give up any variety of opinion which they may entertain, and be proud to sacrifice it to the wish thus expressed ; and that the funds subscribed will at once be appropriated for the procuring of a statue, by Chantry, of the illustrious James Watt.”

Mr AYTOUN, the Treasurer to the fund, mentioned, that the subscriptions now amounted to £1703.

Mr FAIRRIE said, that after the statement which had been made by the Chairman, he felt it would be altogether unnecessary for him to trouble the meeting at any length, in support of the motion he had to propose. He confessed, that in common with a great many others, he had thought that a Column or Statue, placed in some conspicuous or commanding situation—such as the front of the Customhouse—would be the most eligible monument they could raise to the memory of Mr Watt, and serve best to point out to the thousands, who, by means of steam-boats, are daily passing, that Greenock had the honour of giving birth to that eminent individual. After, however, having understood what were the sentiments of Mr Watt of Soho, whom the meeting were to have the pleasure of seeing among them, and what were his liberal intentions towards us, he (Mr F.) willingly yielded any private feelings he might have had on the subject, and he trusted that the meeting would cordially acquiesce in the motion he had now to propose,

“ That this meeting, having understood that such an appropriation of the funds subscribed for the purpose of erecting a monument in Greenock, to the memory of the late James Watt, Esq. of Heathfield, would meet the views, and accord most completely with the sentiments of his son, James Watt, Esq. of Soho, do accordingly resolve, that the money subscribed shall be applied to procure a statue in marble, of our illustrious townsman, by the chissel of the celebrated Chantry.”

Mr SMITH, of Jordanhill, having seconded the motion of Mr Fairrie, it was put by the Chairman, and carried unanimously.

Mr RAMSAY stated, that as the powers of the Committee, appointed by the general meeting of the inhabitants, at which it was resolved to erect a monument to the memory of Mr Watt, were now at an end, he begged to move,

“ That, with the view of carrying the foregoing resolution into effect, the following should be appointed a Committee, with full powers to make such arrangements as may best conduce to the object for which subscriptions have been raised, viz.:—Sir M. S. Stewart, Bart., the Magistrates of Greenock for the time being, Messrs. John Scott, Wm. M'Dowall, James Smith of Jordanhill, James Stewart, James Watt, Roger Aytoun, Archibald Baine, William Macfie, G. J. Weir, Doctor Speirs, George Robertson, jun., William Johnston, and John Fairrie; the Magistrates to be Conveners, and any five to be a quorum.”



Mr Ramsay's motion having been seconded by the Chief Magistrate, and put from the chair, the gentlemen before named were unanimously voted as a Committee, with the powers stated in the motion.

Mr FAIRRIE stated, that Mr James Watt of Soho, Sir Humphry Davy, and Mr Maxwell, M.P., were in town, and proposed, that Messrs. James Watt, Roger Aytoun, and James Stuart, should be appointed to wait on these gentlemen, and request their presence at the meeting, which was unanimously agreed to.

Mr ANDREW MUIR proposed,

"That a vote of thanks be given to the former Committee for their indefatigable and praise-worthy exertions."

The motion was seconded by Mr Samuel Gemmill, and carried unanimously.

Mr FAIRRIE mentioned, that it appeared by the statement submitted to the meeting by Mr Aytoun, that the sum of £128 had been subscribed by gentlemen in Calcutta, principally natives of Greenock, and he proposed,

"That the thanks of the meeting be given to these gentlemen for their liberal contributions, and that the Chief Magistrate be requested to communicate to them this vote accordingly."

The motion was seconded by Mr Denniston, and unanimously agreed to.

Sir M. S. STEWART stated that there could be but one opinion concerning the zeal and efficient labours of the gentlemen composing the Committee, whose duties were now completed.

Some delay having occurred in the return of the deputation,

Sir M. S. STEWART explained that perhaps some apology was due from him, and he regretted the delay that had taken place, "but, indeed, we were ourselves in fault, as the cordiality of our feelings had terminated the proper business of the meeting much sooner than could have been anticipated." He hoped, however, that no gentleman would suffer inconvenience from waiting a few minutes longer, and perhaps this might be repaid by the pleasure of seeing among them their distinguished visitors.

Mr MACFIE, of Langhouse, moved,

"That the thanks of this meeting should be given to those gentlemen at a distance, natives of Greenock, and others, who have so liberally contributed towards the erection of the monument."

The motion was seconded by Bailie Denniston ; and, on being put from the chair, was unanimously carried.

Sir M. S. STEWART stated that the circumstance of their residence abroad enhanced the value of their contribution, as it evinced their regard for their native town, and that they respected the superiority of intellect.

At this stage of the business the deputation returned, introducing Mr Watt, Sir Humphry Davy, and Mr Maxwell, who were received with the warmest plaudits of the meeting, and, having taken their seats near the Chairman,

Sir M. S. STEWART rose and addressed Mr Watt as follows :—“Sir, I certainly consider it one of the most gratifying and affecting circumstances of my life, to be placed in the situation which I have this day the honour to fill—that of being the organ of this great and respectable community, in conveying to you this their public and cordial welcome to this the native town of your illustrious father. You must allow me, however, to say, Sir, that it is not on account of your own acknowledged worth and excellence, that it is not from your own amiable and kindly disposition, so much respected in your own immediate neighbourhood, and so well known and duly appreciated here, that we thus come together in respectful assemblage to receive you, but we are met to receive you as the son of your great and illustrious father. We can see you in no other light—we can admit no other idea. Our veneration for that great man swallows up every consideration—and we feel assured that this must be to yourself the most gratifying cause of this your public reception here to-day, to be thus warmly welcomed among us, as the son of one of the greatest benefactors the world ever was blessed with—of one of the very greatest men this country ever produced, and by far the most distinguished man this town ever gave birth to. While I feel proud, connected as I am with the town of Greenock, the birth-place of James Watt, I would consider it presumption in me, under any circumstances, to attempt even the faintest description of his mighty intellect, and of its stupendous results. But, upon this occasion, of all others, it would be most rash and presumptuous to make such a vain effort in your immediate presence, who must have every great act, and every intellectual achievement of your late father, canonized in your admiring memory. It would be very presumptuous in me also, to make such an attempt in the presence of the many learned and sci-

tific gentlemen I now see around me, who can so much better trace and comprehend the grandeur of the genius we are now intently beholding through the affecting medium of you, Sir, his son and representative; and especially, would the attempt be presumptuous, in the presence of my distinguished relative, the President of the Royal Society, whose kindred mind can so well appreciate the inestimable benefits conferred upon science and mankind, by your illustrious father. Happily for his species, it was one of the great characteristics of Mr Watt's genius, to simplify and reduce to easy practice the laborious combinations of his scientific mind. He has reduced the deepest researches of philosophy to the comprehension of the meanest mechanic, and the power of hundreds of men to the control of the arm of a child. Every man can see, though he may not comprehend, the gigantic efforts of his genius. No man, I believe, ever went deeper into abstract science than Mr Watt; and no man, I am certain, ever produced, from such knowledge, such great practical results.—They are obvious to all; so that I, and every unscientific man, can see, enjoy, and be grateful for them, although we may not comprehend them, nor be able to do even imperfect justice to their inventor. I know, in common with you all, Gentlemen, that the genius of Mr Watt pervades the whole habitable world; and with you also do I thankfully feel, and intensely admire, the great local and national benefits it has conferred. It occupies our cities, it walks upon our waters, it explores the hidden depths of our land, and really seems as though the great inventor himself were still alive to guide its various stupendous operations, for the comfort and advantage of his species. He has, indeed, made the depths of science subservient to the commonest and most useful purposes of life; for I believe, and I speak it under the correction of the high authority near me, that we greatly injure the fame and narrow the reputation of Mr Watt, if we consider him only as a great practical mechanic. I believe him to have been a profound philosopher, and a subtle chemist; and that it was by the aid and complete mastery of these sciences that his penetrating intellect, after years of intense labour, brought to perfection a series of combinations unexampled in the history of the world, and enabled him to immortalize himself, his age, and his country, by bestowing a new and inexhaustible power upon civilized man. But it is as a subject of this realm, as an inhabitant of this happy country, that I can with perfect confidence speak of the almost

incredible benefits conferred by your illustrious father, in multiplying to an inexhaustible degree (inexhaustible at least by our enemies) our national resources. I firmly believe the inventions of Mr Watt were mainly conducive to the preservation of the State, as well by the resources which he furnished, as by the spirit and genius which he awakened. It would, indeed, be a difficult task to compute the direct benefits conferred upon his country by Mr Watt, in supplying her with the truly immense resources which he has done. But it would be altogether impossible to calculate the indirect blessings he has brought upon his native land, and upon the world at large, by arousing in every country, and especially in our own, the gleam of kindred genius, by the beneficent splendour of his discoveries. I remember, as one of those scenes which will ever be fresh in my memory, the proceedings of a meeting of the same character with the present, which took place two years ago in London, on the subject of a national monument to the memory of Mr Watt, at which my distinguished relative (Sir Humphry Davy) and you, I believe, were present. The meeting comprehended the great and illustrious of the land, and the first minister of the crown declared that it was a gratification to feel that such a man had been born in this country ; but it was a still greater gratification to have lived in the same age with such a man, and to witness the benefits and advantages which he, under God, had been the instrument of conferring on mankind. Another meeting took place for the same purpose here, but in this emulation we stand pre-eminent—Greenock being the birth-place of that great man. Words fail me to express the peculiar satisfaction I have in placing in your hands the resolution of this society ; and whatever may have been the difference and variety of opinion arising from an emulation to do the most honour to the genius and memory of Mr Watt, with regard to the description of the memorial, there was a complete unity of feeling on the part of this meeting, to assert in the strongest way, that this town, as his birth-place, ought to show the most marked respect to the memory of your distinguished father. The knowledge that a statue would be the most gratifying to you, has had an instantaneous effect in sinking any diversity of opinion that had existed, and they experience the most heartfelt gratification in yielding to your wishes. Without, however, detaining you any longer, allow me to repeat, that I never knew in the course of my life more honest pride, and more heartfelt satisfaction, than I now do, in announcing to you

the unanimous resolution of so many respectable inhabitants of a town, of which I am proud to be a citizen." Sir M. then read over to Mr Watt the first resolution.

JAMES WATT, Esq., now rose and spoke as follows :—

" Hon. Chairman and Gentlemen—I am too deeply impressed with the honour you have done to the memory of my father, as well as by the kind consideration which has induced you to concede all differences of opinion to what you understood to be my wishes, to be able to do justice to my feelings, upon an occasion so peculiarly interesting to me as a son ; and unused as I am to public speaking, I must trust to your indulgence, whilst I endeavour to comprise, in few words, what I am desirous of saying. The connection of my father's immediate ancestors and of himself with the town of Greenock, and the kindness and respect he had uniformly experienced from its inhabitants, had created a strong desire in his mind, to contribute to the extension of the only institution you possessed, of a literary and scientific description. This he, in a small degree, evinced, by a donation to your library some years ago ; but I have had reason to infer from conversations with him upon that subject, that his wishes were of a more extensive nature, and since his death, I have felt that the duty of carrying them into effect devolved upon me, as a sacred trust. For this, however, no very fitting or convenient opportunity presented itself, until the period when a general expression of the public opinion upon his merits manifested itself ; and I had the gratification of observing that, the inhabitants of his native town, were among the foremost to do honour to his memory, and had raised a sum of money, for the erection of a monument, which should claim him 'as their own.' From that moment I entertained a latent hope they might give the preference to a work from the chissel of Chantry, which, whilst from its individuality and excellence, it conferred the highest honour upon its object, would afford me an immediate and additional incentive, for presenting a sum of money, to be applied to the erection of a handsome building for a library, in which such monument might be most appropriately placed, and most effectually preserved. The Hon. Chairman has just announced, with an energy and warmth of feeling towards my father, and of consideration for myself, which have been most gratifying, your resolution of devoting the sum you have so liberally contributed to the erection of a marble statue, by the eminent artist whose talents have been already so successfully employed

upon his departed friend, my father. It now remains for me to do my part ; and I have, in consequence, the honour of stating to the meeting my intention of presenting the sum of Two Thousand Pounds, to be employed in the erection of a building for a library, of which your statue will form the principal ornament ; and I wish to leave it open to others to add to this sum, if their views should extend farther, so as to combine with it reading-rooms, and a house or apartments for the librarian. I did mean to have made some stipulations with regard to the site and plan of the building, but the extreme liberality with which every wish of mine has been anticipated by the Hon. Chairman, convinces me that I cannot effect my objects better, than by leaving both in his hands. I would only suggest, that Mr Chantry should be consulted as to the mode of placing and lighting the statue. I cannot conclude without expressing the heartfelt satisfaction with which I have this day personally witnessed the high estimation in which my father's memory is held, in this his native town, and without tendering my most grateful thanks to the Chairman and to the meeting, for the honour conferred upon him, as well as for the great courtesy and kindness I have myself experienced."

Sir M. S. STEWART now stated, that a site, and a good one, would not be wanting for the building, in any part of his property in which it might be found most eligible.

Dr. KIRK then rose and addressed the Chairman to the following effect :—

"I rise, Sir, to submit a resolution with which the committee have just now entrusted me—that this meeting entertain the most lively feelings of gratitude and consideration for the high honour done it, by the appearance here to-day of Sir Humphry Davy, the President of the Royal Society of Great Britain. It was the excellence peculiarly characteristic of the genius of our illustrious townsman, that he applied, far more effectively and extensively than other men, the truths of philosophy to the improvement and extension of the useful arts. Those who may regard him as merely an eminent improver and inventor of machines, know little of what his real character and attainments were. Few men of his day were so perfectly and generally acquainted with the sciences, and with every elegant and useful branch of learning, as Mr Watt ; and great as his attainments in mechanics undoubtedly were, they would never have carried him on to the pinnacle of eminence and usefulness at which he at last arrived, had he not brought to their

aid the principles of those sciences which it was his delight to cultivate, to improve, and to adorn. The philosopher who meets us to-day, in honour of our illustrious dead, has signalized himself also, by his admirable application of science to the improvement, and happiness, and safety of mankind ; and that name, which shall appear in the eye of posterity as that of a great discoverer and unfolder of the secrets and mysteries of nature, worthy to be placed on the same level with a Newton, will be reflected, also, no less conspicuously, in the practical applications which he has made of *his* science, to the happiness and improvement of mankind. To us, therefore, who are proud of the memory of our townsman, it is not a little gratifying to have, on this occasion, associated with us, in our act of homage and respect, such a personage as Sir Humphry Davy ! Proud of our townsman, we are entitled to be. He was not only born here, but he was educated here ; and we know, from many circumstances in the course of his life, as well as from the information with respect to his kind intention towards this community, communicated to us this day by his son, that he entertained for us, through life, the feelings of a brother, a townsman, and a friend. The monument you are to raise to our great man's honour is but an act of justice, which this people are bound to pay to his memory, in common with the other cities of the realm. To us, however, such an erection is of far more than ordinary importance, and will produce here far greater effects than it can do elsewhere. Such an erection will, I feel convinced, have a talismanic influence on the youth of our community, and on the generations who are to succeed them, which will lead many of them on, in honourable and successful emulation, in quest of equal excellence. The great advantage of what you, and the other subscribers to this undertaking, are doing, will be, to impress forever and anon, by a strong appeal to the very senses of every youth of our community, as well as of the country at large, the sublime height to which well applied talent, and persevering virtue, can carry even an humble individual.—May your endeavours prosper in this patriotic undertaking ; and may you, and the subscribers, find, in the completion of your labours, the admiration of the whole nation, and the gratitude of this community. Again, I beg to move a vote of cordial thanks to the President of the Royal Society, and to congratulate you, Sir, and the meeting, on the honour he has done us.”

Sir HUMPHRY DAVY replied as follows :—

"I consider it as an honour that I have been permitted to be present on this solemn occasion. Having assisted at the first public meeting, when a National Monument was voted to the memory of James Watt, it is a double pleasure to me to find, that the desire to do honour to so illustrious a man, which was exhibited on that day, by statesmen of the highest rank, patriots and orators, is generally diffused among his countrymen, and proudly acknowledged, and so efficiently acted upon, by his townsmen of Greenock. As President of that Society of which Mr Watt was one of the greatest ornaments, as attached to the pursuit of science, and as personally acquainted with him, I feel that the triumph of philosophy, as applied to practical purposes, to utility, and to confer blessings and benefits on society, is itself celebrated in every mark of respect paid to his memory. One monument, owing to him by his country, is to be erected in the metropolitan church of Britain, where the genius of Chantry will be associated with his immortality, and which may announce his exalted talents and virtues to posterity. It is, I think, well fitting, and a proof of the taste, feeling, and judgment of the inhabitants of Greenock, that another similar memorial shall ornament the place of his birth, where it may prove an incentive to rising merit—where it may show how intelligence and industry can create power and fortune, and be a stimulus to the rising generation in the search after usefulness and greatness. And I cannot imagine a more appropriate place for such a memorial than that receptacle offered by the liberality of his excellent son. Mr Watt, if he could have anticipated the honours due to his memory, would, I am sure, knowing well, as I do, his unobtrusive, modest, and exalted character, and his desire to be useful, have desired that a memorial of him should have had something of the nature of a public benefit; and this is effected by fixing his statue in an institution for the diffusion of knowledge, and for enabling the inhabitants of Greenock to profit by the resources of science. There is a kind of sanctity attached to the place where the spirits of genius and intelligence first opened in the world, and his statue will no where have so marked an effect; and there is, perhaps, no spot on the face of Britain where it is associated with so many moving monuments of his power and utility. There is not an hour in the day when the results of his mind are not felt or seen, and in which the inhabitants of Greenock are not called upon to be proud of the illustrious person, who, almost a century ago, first saw the light

in their town."—Sir H. D. concluded by apologising that indisposition prevented him from indulging in any farther observations.

Bailie Denniston proposed that the thanks of the meeting be given to Mr Maxwell, M.P., for the honour done the meeting by his presence. The vote was seconded by Mr Macfie, and carried unanimously.

Mr MAXWELL expressed how highly he was gratified by the honour of attending this meeting. His friend, Sir M. Shaw Stewart, was so kind as to mention that this meeting was to be held to-day, and was so flattering as to add that his presence might be agreeable to the gentlemen composing the meeting. Mr M. stated how truly he concurred in the sentiments which had been already expressed; and he considered it a proud moment for the County of Renfrew, and particularly for the Town of Greenock, in which they met the son of a man whose name had shed lustre not only on his native town, but on the age that gave him birth, and with an individual so distinguished in the annals of science as the President of the Royal Society; he conceived that no place was more appropriate for a conspicuous memorial than the commercial and manufacturing County of Renfrew and Town of Greenock, which had so largely benefited by, and had such frequent opportunities of witnessing the result of, his scientific discoveries. This monument, combined with the institution to which it was to be so appropriately attached, would be an excitement to the rising generation to devote their talents with assiduity, in the successful attainment of those branches of learning which should promote their own comfort and happiness, and benefit mankind; and would impress them with the conviction that talent and virtue will rise to the highest eminence, even from the humblest situation. He expressed how warmly he and his family participated in the feelings of this meeting, and how fully and cordially the County of Renfrew felt satisfaction at Mr Watt's presence; and that he, as the representative of the county, was gratified to convey to him the sentiments so fully and respectfully developed at this meeting, as well as those which were entertained by all classes of the county.

Mr WATT, of Crawfordsdyke, now moved that the cordial thanks of the meeting be given to Sir M. S. Stewart for his conduct in the chair, for the liberal offer he had made of a proper site for the proposed building, and for the desire he has always shown to promoting the interests of the town. The motion, being

seconded by Mr James Stuart, was carried amidst the applause of the meeting.

Sir M. SHAW STEWART replied as follows :—

“ It is not as a matter of form that I now rise to return thanks for the compliment which has been paid me. I can safely say that this is one of the proudest and happiest days of my life, and one that may be predicted as of beneficial influence on the future destinies of the inhabitants of the town of Greenock. It has brought home one important fact, that this town did give birth to Mr Watt. Though I have an important duty to perform, I cannot undertake to develop the stores of intellect of that great man, but I can perceive, through a long vista of years, the benefits that are to accrue to the inhabitants of this town, and mankind in general, by his philosophical researches and scientific discoveries, and that still the character of James Watt will be conspicuous.—These benefits are increasing and exhaustless. I will now allude to an Institution in this town for instructing at a cheap rate the artizans, in the principles of mechanical science, which originated in the philanthropy of some individuals. Under the fostering care of Dr Kirk and Mr Fairrie, gentlemen, who, notwithstanding of their busy and laborious avocations, have devoted a large portion of their time to the promotion of its object, this institution has already accomplished a great deal of good ; and these gentlemen may consider this day as a happy crowning of their efforts. I now respectfully, and without the remotest feeling of vanity, advert to my own situation as connected with this community, which I do with all humility. I feel my own responsibility, and that I have a sacred duty to perform, and to assure you that the advancement of the interests of this town, and its inhabitants, will be to me a matter of the most earnest solicitude ; and I consider that the most substantial benefit which can be conferred on them, will be to conduce to the instruction of the rising generation, as it would have been most congenial to the mind of the illustrious dead. I hail this day, therefore, as one peculiarly auspicious ; and I pledge myself that the promotion of the comforts, elegancies, and conveniences of the town, and the happiness of its inhabitants, will be the object of my unceasing efforts.”

(3.)

LAYING OF THE FOUNDATION STONE OF THE WATT MONUMENT.

(From the Greenock Intelligencer.)

THE foundation-stone of the Monument to the memory of the illustrious James Watt was yesterday laid with masonic honours. At an early hour the arrival of the corporate and masonic bodies from a distance, and the muster of the lodges and societies belonging to the town, gave note of preparation of the approaching ceremony. Flags were displayed from the steeple, the coffee-room, and numerous other points along the principal streets ; and, notwithstanding the exceedingly unfavourable state of the weather—the day being very wet—the streets were thronged with crowds of people eager to witness the unusual and splendid spectacle. At half-past eleven o'clock, the various bodies which were to form part of the procession marched in regular order, preceded by their bands of instrumental music, to the Mid Parish Church, to join in public worship on the occasion. The church was well filled in every part, and presented to the eye an interesting and imposing scene ; a considerable portion of it being occupied with the Magistrates of towns, and other Corporate bodies, the Members of the different Mason Lodges, &c. &c., decorated with their appropriate badges and insignia. An eloquent and appropriate sermon was preached by the Rev. Mr Smith, from the 4th verse of the 50th chapter of Isaiah. At the conclusion of the service a beautiful anthem was sung, and the various public bodies afterwards retired in regular order. They then fell into line in the square in the following order :

Mr Robert Lyle, Superintendent of Police, Marshal (on Horseback).

Band of Music.

Carters and Carmen (Mounted).

Military Band.

Town Officers.

Provost, Magistrates, and Council of Greenock :

James Watt, Esq. Provost.

William Macfie, Esq. }
 James Stewart, Esq. }
 James Stuart, Esq. }
 John Ker, Esq. } Bailles.

Celtic Club.
 The Magistrates' Body Guard.

Celtic Club.
 The Magistrates' Body Guard.

A. Anderson, Esq. Treasurer.	
R. Kerr, Esq.	
J. Buchanan, sen. Esq.	
J. Buchanan, jun. Esq.	
W. Baine, jun. Esq.	
J. MacLellan, jun. Esq.	
A. Clark, Esq.	
J. Caird, Esq.	
W. Leitch, Esq.	
Mr Williamson, Procurator Fiscal.	
Mr Turner, Senior Town Clerk.	
Mr Wilson, Assistant Treasurer.	
Mr Gray, Junior Town Clerk.	
Mr Patten, Town's Law Agent in Edinburgh.	
Dr Jas. Brown, Rector of the Grammar School.	
Mr Buchanan, Town's Mathematical Teacher.	
Town Officers.	
Provost and Magistrates of Dumbarton.	
Provost and Magistrates of Hamilton.	
Provost and Magistrates of Anderston.	
Lieutenancy and Justices of the Peace.	
Committee and Trustees of the Watt Monument.	
Chairman and Directors of the Library.	
Members of the Watt Club.	
Proprietors of Library and Subscribers for the Statue.	
Greenock Medical and Chirurgical Association.	
Collector Saunders and Comptroller Campbell of His Majesty's Customs, and Collector Wharton of the Excise.	
Members of Chamber of Commerce.	
Harbour Commissioners.	
Water Trustees and Commissioners.	
Deacon and Master Court of the Incorporation of Wrights.	
Band of Music.	
Deacon and Master Court of the Incorporation of Coopers.	
Preses and Journeymen Coopers.	
Band of Music.	
Engineers.	
Hatters.	
Masonic Bodies, Junior being first.	
Dunoon, Argyll, - - - - -	335
Hamilton, Clydesdale, - - - - -	298
Rothesay, St. John, - - - - -	292
Greenock, St. John, - - - - -	175
Largs, St. John, - - - - -	173
Stevenson, Thistle, and Rose, - - - - -	169
Ayr, Royal Arch, - - - - -	165

Pollokshaws,	- - - - -	153
Kilbarchan, St. Barchan,	- - - - -	154
Paisley, St. Mirren,	- - - - -	129
Rutherglen, Royal Arch,	- - - - -	116
Doric, Port-Glasgow.	- - - - -	68
Inverary Lodge,	- - - - -	50
Glasgow, St. Mungo,	- - - - -	27
Dumbarton, Kilwinning,	- - - - -	18
Hamilton, Kilwinning,	- - - - -	7

THE GRAND LODGE.

The procession, when fully arranged, presented a magnificent and imposing array. Along its whole line the colours of the various bodies, and the tasteful, appropriate, and ingeniously constructed emblems of the trades added to the splendour of the spectacle. The Coopers mustered about 200 strong, and had no less than fifteen flags, and carried two very well executed figures of men making barrels, and two others of workmen shaving hoops. They were preceded by an instrumental band. The engineers were about 150 in number. They had a variety of fine flags, and two models of steam-engines, and one of a steam-boiler. There were 24 Master Wrights, with a beautiful standard, and before them there was borne their Charter, granted by Sir John Schaw in 1734. But one of the finest sights was the Greenock Carmen and Carters on horseback. This body consisted of about 100 individuals, preceded by a band. An idea of the length of the procession may be formed from the fact, that before the last of the bodies composing it had left Cathcart Square, the carmen in its front had already reached Grey Place—a distance of more than half a mile. The route followed was that announced in our last, namely, along Hamilton and Brougham Streets, up Margaret Street, and down Union Street.

The procession having reached the site of the monument, in Union Street, the different bodies composing it took their appointed stations on the platform, and in a semi-circle before it. Silence was then proclaimed, and the Rev. Mr Menzies, as Grand Chaplain, offered up an impressive prayer, acknowledging the beneficence of the Almighty in raising up, from time to time, men such as Watt, whose extraordinary powers of mind enabled them to effect so much for the promotion of human comfort and happiness; and imploring a blessing upon the work which they were now about to commence.

The Grand Treasurer, Mr Chatfield, then proceeded to deposit

in the foundation stone, two bottles, containing the following coins, newspapers, &c.;—

The Gold, Silver, and Copper coins of the present reign.

Copy of the Charter of the Town of Greenock.

Copy of the Greenock Intelligencer of the 22d August.

Copy of the Greenock Advertiser of the 24th do.

Copy of the Catalogue and Regulations of the Greenock Library.

Copy of the Regulations of the Watt Club.

Copy of the Edinburgh Almanack for 1835.

Copy of the Greenock Directory.

Copy of the Inscription on the Plate.

The Director, Mr John Black, next read the inscription upon the Plate, which is as follows:—

To receive and preserve for the contemplation of
succeeding generations,

A M A R B L E S T A T U E

Dedicated by the Inhabitants of Greenock,
To the memory of their illustrious Townsman

JAMES WATT;

And, to afford accommodation for a Scientific Library founded
by him, and for

The Public Library of Greenock;

By the favour of ALMIGHTY GOD,

Sir Michael Shaw Stewart, of Greenock and Blackhall, Baronet, Member
of Parliament for the County of Renfrew,
Provincial Grand Master Mason of the district, assisted by
The Honourable the Provost and Magistrates of Greenock,
The Grand Lodge of Scotland and numerous other Lodges,
Laid the FOUNDATION STONE of

THIS BUILDING,

To be erected by James Watt, Esq. of Astonhall, Warwickshire,
in token of his profound respect for

HIS FATHER'S MEMORY,

And of his regard for the interests of the Town of

GREENOCK,

In presence of the Public Bodies of the Town and neighbourhood,
On Tuesday, the 25th day of August, 1835,
Era of Masonry 5835,

And in the 6th year of the reign of His Majesty William the 4th.

MAGISTRATES OF GREENOCK :

James Watt, Esq. of Heathfield, Provost;
 William Macfie, James Stewart, James Stuart, and
 John Ker, Esquires, Bailies.

COMMITTEE OF THE MONUMENT :

Sir Michael Shaw Stewart, Bart., The Magistrates of Greenock for the time being, John Scott, William M'Dowall, James Smith of Jordanhill, James Stuart, James Watt, Roger Aytoun, Archibald Baine, William Macfie, G. J. Weir, George Robertson, John Fairrie, Esquires, and Dr. John Speirs.

TRUSTEES OF THE BUILDING :

James Watt, Esq. of Astonhall, Sir Michael Shaw Stewart, Bart., the Provost of the Town of Greenock for the time being, The Chairman of the Public Library for the time being.

COMMITTEE OF THE PUBLIC LIBRARY :

Claud Marshall, Chairman, The Rev. Daniel Macfarlane, Thomas Turner, John Wharton, George Williamson, James Caird, Alex. Patten, Samuel Gemmill, and William Service.

Sir Francis Chantrey, Sculptor of the Statue; Edward Blore, Esquire, Architect of the Building; Mr Charles Brown, resident Inspector; Messrs. Buchanan & Lamb, Joiners, and John Lang, Mason, Contractors:

WHICH UNDERTAKING

May the Supreme Architect of the Universe
 BLESS AND PROSPER.

The plate having been deposited in the foundation stone, the Most Worshipful Provincial Grand Master, Sir Michael Shaw Stewart, received from the hands of the Director the Level, Plummet, and Mallet, and laid the foundation stone with the usual ceremonial, concluding by giving it three strokes with the mallet, and pronouncing these words:—" Being satisfied, and having confidence in the Royal mystery of our art, I now proceed to complete our work."

Three cheers were then given by the assembly, and the bands struck up the King's Anthem.

The Grand Senior Warden, Mr Adam M'Leish, then delivered to the Grand Master the Cornucopie, and the Grand Junior Warden, Mr Robt. Ewing, the Silver Cups with Wine and Oil; and the Grand Master, stepping forward, spread the corn upon the stone, and poured the wine and the oil, saying, " May God Almighty prosper this undertaking."

This was followed by three loud cheers from the Brethren and the surrounding multitude ; the bands playing the Masons' Anthem.

The Grand Master, Sir Michael Shaw Stewart,* thereafter ascended the platform and addressed the Committee of the Watt Monument, the Committee of the Greenock Library, and the other bodies present.

Provost Watt returned an answer to the address of the Grand Master.

The procession then returned by Kilblain Street, Nicholson Street, &c. to Cathcart Square, where the various bodies separated. The shops along the whole route of the procession were shut during the greater part of the day, and little or no business was done throughout the town. It is much to be regretted that the weather was so exceedingly unfavourable, as the effect of the spectacle was thereby considerably marred, and our population were prevented from enjoying, to the extent they otherwise might have done, this great jubilee, in honour of their illustrious fellow-townsman. During the whole day the rain descended literally in torrents ; completely drenching all who were exposed to it ;—in fact, we have seldom, if ever, seen so violent, and, at the same time, so constant a fall of rain as that of yesterday. But even “the pelting of this pitiless storm” did not prevent the streets from being thronged all afternoon and evening with intermingling crowds of strangers, and of the inhabitants of the town, dressed in their holiday attire, and seemingly as happy and light-hearted as if, instead of a day of deluge and puddle, it had been one of the finest that ever shone. The vessels in the harbours were decorated with colours in honour of the occasion, and every mark of respect was shown to the memory of the “Man,” who had done so much for the cause of science and of civilization. In the evening a Grand Lodge was opened in the Assembly Rooms. The Pro-

* At the time Sir Michael presided over this interesting ceremony, he was labouring—as he himself stated in the address he delivered on the occasion—under severe bodily indisposition. Sir Michael's ailment arose from the accidental falling of his horse, while passing, sometime previously, through one of the streets of Greenock. His death, which followed a few months thereafter, besides occasioning an irreparable loss to his family, deprived the Town of Greenock of a zealous well-wisher, and one who had already given proof of the sincere and enlightened interest which he took in its commercial prosperity. His premature death was the subject of deep-felt and general regret.

vincial Grand Master, Sir M. S. Stewart, having been unable to be present, on account of indisposition, the Substitute Grand Master, Wm. Macdowall, Esq. of Bar, presided.

(4.)

Letter from the Very Reverend the Principal of the University of Edinburgh :—

University Chambers, Edinburgh,
February 5, 1828.

SIR,—I have just now been favoured with an intimation, through my good acquaintance and friend, Mr C. Buchanan, that the James Watt Club of Greenock is disposed to add my humble name to the list of their Honorary Members ;—allow me to assure you, that I would sincerely and strongly feel that such a distinction conferred on me would be a source to me of both pride and heartfelt gratification.

By every succeeding generation of Scotsmen, the memory of James Watt will be recalled, as the memory of a man whose inventive genius shed incalculable benefits on the arts of his country; and a Society instituted to perpetuate, in his birth-place, his merits and his fame, is a body with which the loftiest in our land should reckon it an honour to be connected.

I take the liberty, Sir, to make this communication to you, in compliance with the desire of Mr Buchanan ; and have the honor to be,

Sir,

Your most obt. and most humble Servant,

GEO. H. BAIRD.

George Williamson, Esq.

(5.)

Letter from the Very Reverend the Principal of the University of Glasgow :—

Glasgow College, 7th Nov., 1828.

SIR,—Your letter of the 3d, announcing that the gentlemen composing the Watt Club of Greenock have done me the honour of adding my name to their list of Honorary Members, has reached me this morning.

This compliment is not the less gratifying to me, that I regard it as paid chiefly to my official situation. Every Member of the University of Glasgow must reflect, with peculiar satisfaction, on the early and interesting connection which existed between this Seminary and the late Mr Watt, and take pleasure in perpetuating the memory of that connection.

For my own part I beg leave to offer my thanks, both for the distinction conferred on me, and for the obliging terms in which it has been communicated ; and to assure you that I value highly the opportunity thus afforded me of expressing my admiration of the talents and genius of that great man, and of bearing testimony to the worth and excellence of his character.

I have the honour to be, respectfully,

Sir,

Your most obedient Servant,

D. MACFARLAN.

Geo. Williamson, Esq.



